

Secular spiritual tourism

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Summary

- The changing concept of spirituality in post modern society
- The decline of allegiance to religious doctrine
- The movement toward development of the self and interconnectedness with the earth
- The development of and increase in secular pilgrimage
- The impact spiritual capital has in the work, social and family communities of travellers
- Thus, 'every traveller is potentially an 'Ambassador for Peace' (IIPT, 2007)

Changing concept of spirituality

- In the past, spirituality has been attached to traditional dualistic religions
- Growing trend has seen a decline of people participating in religious institutions and ceremonies, and an increase of those who claim they are spiritual but not religious
- People 'cherry pick' concepts from a number of philosophies and belief systems around the globe, developing their own unique 'designer religion'
- Hay and Socha (2005) concluded that spirituality is natural and universal and thus it follows it cannot only be related to members of culturally specific religions

Changing concept of spirituality

- Thus, all humans including atheists and those hostile to religions, must possess spirituality
- Campbell (1999) recognised that “the percentage of the population who say that they believe in God has been steadily falling since Gallup began regular polling on this question after the Second World War”.
- The percentage of the population who declare they do not believe in God has gone from 3 to 20% (Campbell)
- The trend correlates with the development of scientific enquiry in the West, mass schooling and university education

Cultural, environmental and ecological consciousness

- Two fundamentally different concepts of the world (Grayling, 2003)
- 1. secular, where ones point of reference is in nature and natural laws
- 2. transcendental, where ones point of reference is outside the human realm and beyond the boundaries of this world
- These two competing principles are increasingly in conflict: Humanist versus Religious conceptions
- A “deep characteristic of human nature [is] the desire to travel and be in motion” (Senn, 2002, p. 124)

Cultural, environmental and ecological consciousness

- Spiritual journeys are undertaken by many in a search for meaning to their modern individualistic lives in industrial societies
- As society became more secular, so too did the ideas of what we see as spiritual.
- There has been an increase in environmental and ecological knowledge and a growing understanding of the human impact on the earth
- Move away from 'humans' controlling and manipulating, to understanding the interconnectedness of, the earth
- Search for meaning cannot be bought, exchanged or gifted, it must be discovered by the individual

Cultural, environmental and ecological consciousness

- Two areas emerging as new beliefs and attitudes which travellers embody:
- 1. the importance of the discovery of the self, to ‘realise their potential’; and
- 2. reconnecting with the environment, understanding the interconnectedness of the Earth’s ecology

Secular pilgrimage

- Increasingly, travel is seen as the opportunity to reach out from comfort zones of lives and explore other lands, cultures and belief systems.
- Tourism is an avenue to explore the contemporary search for spirituality (West, 2005, p. 9)
- Many authors challenging religious pilgrimage and argue that secular tourists travel to what are sacred sites for them
- Spiritual tourism “secular travel which purposely or inadvertently includes an experience, beyond the norm for the individual traveller, which impacts that individual’s belief system (Chesworth, 2006, p. 2)

Secular pilgrimage

- “Spiritual tourist could be defined as someone who visits a place out of his/her usual environment, with the intention of spiritual growth (which could be religious, non-religious, sacred or experiential in nature)” (Haq and Jackson, 2006, p. 5)
- The focus is on the journey, not the destination
- Allocentric person is more likely to travel for spiritual reasons because they are interested in learning, “inner directed, self-reliant, active and somewhat meditative” (Chesworth, p. 7)
- Pilgrims choose a simple lifestyle when travelling so they can see and think clearly away from the pressures of modern living and so counteract with natural, wilderness experiences to renew and reinforce their sense of self.

Impacts on visited communities and at home

- Spiritual tourism shares boundaries with education tourism, in that it is a learning experience motivated by a quest for knowledge.
- “The best hidden and socially most determinant education investment...[is] the domestic transmission of cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244)
- Thus tourism is an excellent way in which to educate “the other” through an exchange of cultural knowledge
- Social interactions between travellers and the exchange of information en-route have important implications for publicity and promotion of destinations, accommodation , transport and places to eat (Murphy, 2005)

Impacts on visited communities and at home

- Economic benefits of mass-tourism are over emphasised
- Little or no consideration is given to the effects on the physical and social environments of host communities, such as erosion of cultural values.
- (Wall and Mathieson, 2006)
- Contrary to this, travellers, including backpackers and pilgrims, are known NOT to have the superficial motives, attitudes or demeanour of mass tourists
- AND, they penetrated deeper into host societies and cultures and were more authentic than mass tourists
- (Murphy, 2005)

Impact on visited communities and at home

- Jarvis (2005) highlights the importance of backpackers to local communities, who found 72% of expenditure flowed directly back into the local community economy
- Average spend per day was A\$38 (Ush\$57,000) and average stay 152 days which equates to a spend of around A\$5776 (Ush\$8,664,000). It would need a spend of A\$825 (Ush\$1,237,500) per day for a seven day stay from a mass tourist which is highly unlikely, thus
- Backpacker market is a “valuable, if not underestimated, segment of the global tourism industry” (p. 167)
- Chesworth highlights that tourists (and our consumerist society in general) may be able to purchase everything they need or want but they cannot purchase the experience, this must be lived.

Africa

- People recognise Africa as being the birthplace of modern humans. It has ancient cultures, artefacts, history and art that stem well before European, Middle-Eastern and Asian settlements. The geological formations, forests, deserts, rivers and waterfalls are extreme and of great curiosity. For those wanting to connect the self with others, reconnect to the earth, their origins and to where life began, Africa provides a secular spiritual connection. Africa has wildlife areas that are unique in the world and many people who come to visit the African wildlife, natural formations and people come for a spiritual experience, especially for those who have become culturally, environmentally and ecologically interested.

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