

International Journal of Tourism and Spirituality, Vol.2, Issue 1, 2017  
University of Science and Culture

---

## **Tourism: a Tool for Spirituality Development**

**Hamid Zargham Boroujeny**

*Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran*

*zargham@atu.usc.ac.ir*

### **Abstract**

Tourism development is considered an important tool in promoting economic growth, alleviating poverty, and advancing spirituality development. This paper aims to review the relationship between tourism and spirituality and to explain how tourism development could contribute to spirituality development goals. The paper provides an analysis of the relationship between tourism and spirituality development. It explores definitions and constructs of spirituality and reviews experiences and practices in relation to spiritual resources. However, by looking at a brief history of human intelligence we learned that there is a low agreement today upon the spirituality definition. In order to reach a broad agreement, the paper was divided into two sections. The first section explains the importance of tourism and spirituality as components of life success while the second section discusses some important issues regarding the development of spirituality through tourism activities by presenting a model that provides clarification, definition, and relations to the terms of faith, spirituality, religion and tourism. The model can serve as a means to begin the dialogue needed to increase understanding of this important concept. The paper also suggests that the ability to effectively develop tourism can strongly and positively influence spiritual principles and practices.

**Keywords:** tourism, spirituality, spiritual development

### **Tourism development**

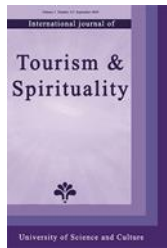
There has been a considerable number of published papers on concepts and scopes of different aspects of tourism. Tourism Society of England defines tourism as ‘the temporary, short-term movement of people to destination outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during the stay at each destination. It includes movements for all purposes’. A significant problem regarding the study of tourism is that a multidisciplinary approach to research methods is required in order to study tourism.

Tourism development is increasingly considered an important tool in promoting economic growth, alleviating poverty, and advancing spirituality development. However, spiritual aspects of tourism are often discounted or discredited in much of the related literature. Thus, in this paper, the relationship between tourism and spirituality development goals is reviewed as well as describing how to develop and integrate spiritual capabilities, values, and processes of effective tourism.

There are several international initiatives emphasizing the potential of tourism to promote of spirituality growth, economic development, environmental protection, and cultural preservation. The activities of these initiatives include developing seminars to build capacity and publishing related reports in order to enhance public awareness of the role of tourism in spirituality development. The goals of these initiatives are compatible with objectives of sustainable types of tourism (Ashley, Roe, & Goodwin, 2001). The potential of tourism development as a tool to contribute to spirituality growth is derived from several unique characteristics of the tourism system (UNWTO, 2006) summarized in the model.

### **Spirituality**

Spirituality, in general, has recently become an important subject of research in social and business fields but it is a difficult concept to define. Although almost all cultures and religions of the world agree that humans consist of body, mind, soul, and spirit, from all perspectives, spirituality is about the ways of approaching the unknowns in the life, as well as the ways of defining the term ‘sacred’.



We have been working hard to gain material development by education and business while religious centers, on the other hand, have been responsible for spiritual development. Today, the need for spirit recognition and development in the service sector in general, and tourism business specifically, is more perceptible than ever.

Spirituality is a multi-dimensional concept based on several dimensions such as religion, music, culture, people, places, food, and tourism. What we mean by spiritual dimensions is the level or personal progress and development. As a result, studying spirituality in its entirety is a very difficult task and, therefore, a certain approach is needed in order to make it easier. Researchers from various disciplines have considered different aspects of the relationships between spirituality and tourism.

Spirituality has become an important area of sociological and business research (Holman 2011). Since late 1900's, people are increasingly turning toward spirituality for various personal and social reasons. People are seeking spiritual solutions for the exhaustion brought about by their lifestyle that has become more commercial and individualistic (Blomfield 2009). Although the influence of various businesses on spirituality is growing, there is no industrially or academically accepted strategy to develop spirituality. Many psychologists suggest that spirituality is an inherent element of the human being. In other words, spirituality means individuals' try to discover and connect to the supernatural universe in order to give meaning to their usual life.

Other definitions include a relationship with the sacred, 'an individual's experience of and relationship with a fundamental, nonmaterial aspect of the universe' (Tolan, 2002). 'Others view soul or spirit as a vital principle or animating force believed to be within living beings or a source of energy that lives within each person' (Chee, 2002). As Danesh (2001) argues, understanding human spirituality provides individuals with an opportunity to connect to a larger source of energy and power, enabling them to understand who they are (Hamilton & Jackson, 1998). 'It is this exploration of the

meaningfulness of our lives and our relationships with ourselves, others, nature, or a higher power that is considered as the essence of spirituality' (Hamilton & Jackson, 1998).

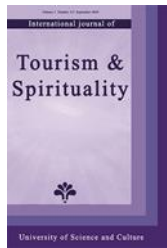
Appreciating spirituality through tourism is a unique experience and is based on personal needs of people. There is a belief that spirituality is instrumental for effectiveness when working with communities and institutions, especially when employed by those in leadership positions. It is hoped to further promote the well-being of individuals and society through describing and encouraging the spiritual dimensions of tourism development and the need and importance of putting them into practice.

Religion, spirituality, and faith – often used interchangeably though their definitions – are unique and distinct. According to Rev. David Palmer (2001) experience of or quest for the 'ultimate' forms the core of the religions. This experience is expressed and communicated to others by means of the story (e.g., the Quran) and symbol (e.g., music, dance, images). Finally, reflection on religious experiences is articulated in philosophical terms in the form of doctrine and dogma.

'Parks (2000) described spirituality to be a personal search for meaning, transcendence, wholeness, purpose, and apprehension of spirit as the animating essence at the core of life' (Love, 2002, p.358). Therefore, as Love (2002) argues, from this perspective, it can be inferred that spirituality forms the core of the religion. However, it must be considered that these two terms are different; because some religious people may be more tied to dogma and doctrine rather than spiritual issues, 'and those who fail to distinguish story (e.g., the Bible) from dogma and doctrine. Other people disavow any notion of or connection with religion, yet are deeply involved in a search for meaning, wholeness, and purpose' (p.358).

### **Religion and Spirituality**

The human desire is a solution to problems of all kinds within his/her situation. According to Morinis (1992) 'the belief is that somewhere beyond the known world, there exists a power that can make right the difficulties that appear so insoluble and intractable here and now' (Morinis, 1992). Religion and spirituality are the most common motivations for travel. Many tourism destinations have been



developed largely as a result of their connections to sacred people, places, and events. But, the fact is that the pilgrimage site need not necessarily be religious. The 'secular' world has as much potential to create sacred places; for example, cultural and national shrines, war graves, and sporting venues (Reader, 1993).

For sociologists, religion is a 'stable cluster of values, norms, statuses, roles, and groups developed around a basic social need' (Smith, 1995, p. 905), the social need to make a distinction between sacred and profane is at the core of all religions. For sociologists, religion is a 'stable cluster of values, norms, statuses, roles, and groups developed around a basic social need' (Smith, 1995, p. 905), the social need to make a distinction between sacred and profane is at the core of all religions.

As Tolan (2002) suggests, there is an important distinction between spirituality and religion. 'Whereas spirituality is a consideration of meaning or ultimate purpose, religion refers to the organized, institutionalized set of beliefs, teachings, and practices that are established to connect groups of individuals to a particular expression of spirituality' (Tolan, 2002, cited in Huitt and Robbins, 2003). According to Huitt and Robbins (2003), a person may be spiritual but not necessarily religious. Alternatively, he/she can be religious without being spiritual. 'This distinction is an important part of the discussion of spiritual development in the context of tourism' (p.2). It must be noted that 'measures of increased interest in spirituality have increased at the same rate as leaving organized religion' (Marler & Hadaway, 2002, cited in Huitt and Robbins, 2003). This discrepancy between beliefs and practice, in Taylor's view, may be one reason that people seem to be seeking spirituality (Huitt and Robbins, 2003).

There are three categories of humankind's spiritual belief including naturalism, pantheism, and theism (Copan, 2001). According to Maslow (1983), from naturalism view, spirituality and definitions of what is sacred exist as a natural operation of the human mind and that our spirituality ceases to exist along with our physical body (Huitt and Robbins, 2003). As the standard of living increased, people are not

worried about survival and safety and their concerns will shift to self-actualization and spiritual needs such as self-transcendence.

In Levine (1997) view, ‘pantheists believe that God exists in everything and that the entire universe is either God or an expression of His nature’. According to Collins (1998), Theists believe that humankind’s spirituality results from a non-material soul, created by God, and will exist after death (Huitt and Robbins, 2003, p1).

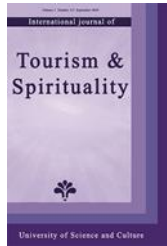
However, from all perspective, spirituality interpretation is considered an important issue.

### **Development of Human Spirituality**

Several authors have stated that spirituality is needed to face the tourism challenges of the 21st century. ‘In plainest terms, unless organizations not only acknowledge the soul but also attempt to deal direct with spiritual concerns in the tourism business, they will not meet the challenges of the millennium’ (Mitroff and Denton, 1999, cited in Smith, 2014).

‘To effectively meet the problems of the tourism development, we need leaders who have high spiritual intelligence in conjunction with high cognitive intelligence and high emotional intelligence’ (Smith, 2014, p.4). Spiritual intelligence means the intelligence with which we can solve our problems regarding meaning and value; and place our actions and our lives in a wider, richer, meaning-giving context. Functioning of both cognitive and emotional intelligence is considerably affected by Spiritual intelligence (Zohar, 2012, cited in Smith 2014). As previous authors such as Covey (2005) and Wigglesworth (2006) suggest, ‘Successfully handling today’s management conditions of rapid change, globalization and advanced technologies demand mature planning with high spiritual intelligence going beyond effectiveness to greatness’ (Smith 2014, p.23). ‘As with every other area of human development, there are diverse viewpoints on how spiritual development occurs’ (Huitt and Robbins, 2014, p.4).

According to some authors such as Hay (2000), spiritual experiences can be considered a part of natural selection because of holding some type of survival value. Also, Sullivan (1993) believes that intimacy

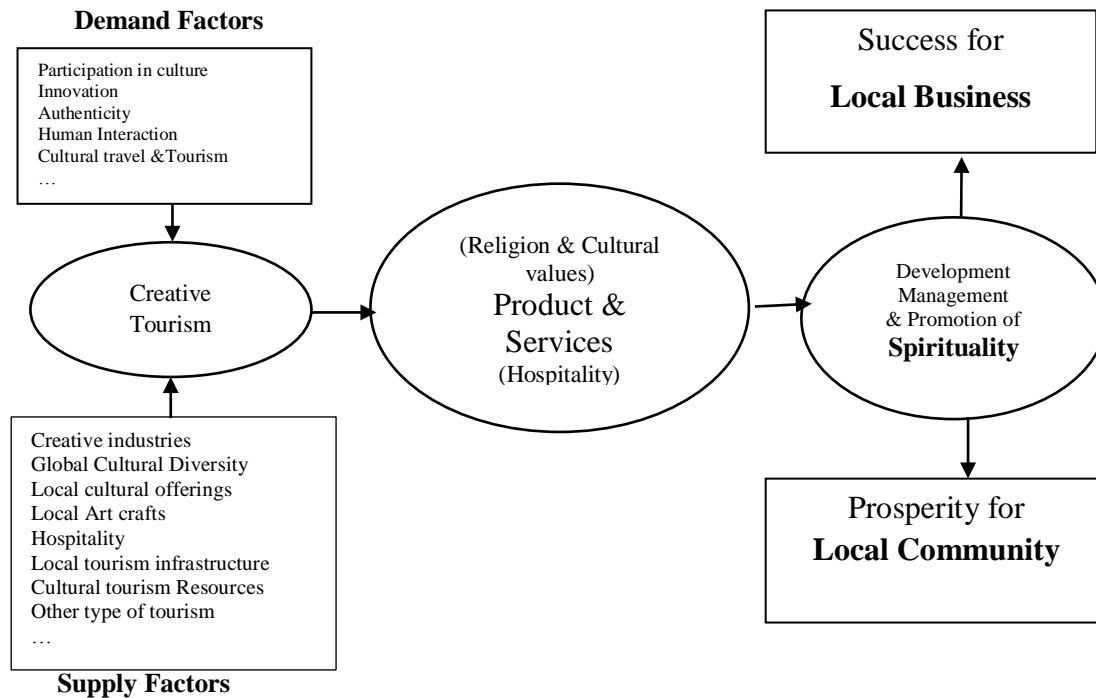


---

with which people are involved with their life experiences can be considered as a component of spiritual development (Huitt and Robbins, 2014). Nevertheless, differentiating the process of spiritual development from any specific religious development is a challenging issue. But, according to Huitt and Robbins (2014), when considering individual from a holistic perspective, the development of the human spirit is an essential issue that should be considered.

### **Proposed Model**

A theoretical exploratory technique based on literature review is employed to propose a conceptual model on illustrating spirituality development within the framework of tourism. This theoretical, conceptual, and descriptive model relies heavily on the factors that influence tourism development directly and spirituality development indirectly. It is worth mentioning that, according to a literature review in the future, travel and tourism may no longer consist of sightseeing and consuming material products. Rather, it will be more about finding oneself in a deeper understanding of others and the surrounding world (Ambroz & Ovsenik, 2011).

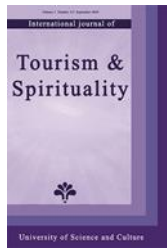


**Fig.1. Role of tourism in spirituality development, adopted from Ohridska-Olson (2010)**

This model shows that metaphor of the tourist as pilgrim and tourism as the pilgrimage is an important fact in spirituality studies. The model considers the meanings, values and potential extensions of metaphors of tourism and how these relate to spirituality, and how all these categories interconnect. It also has several conclusions:

As Honey & Gilpin (2009) argue, tourism provides regions particularly marginal areas with an opportunity for economic diversification. For example, remote areas or developing countries with cultural and natural attractions can benefit from tourism development in the form of income generation, job creation, and so on. Therefore, communities with rich history and cultural heritage will be able to apply these unique assets in order to develop spirituality. ‘Tourism is





the only export sector where the consumer travels to the exporting country that provides opportunities for the poor to become exporters through the sale of goods and services to foreign tourists' (Richardson, 2010, p.2).

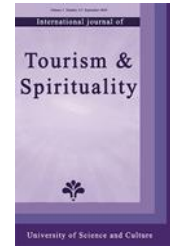
Overall, it can be stated that spirituality in tourism is too significant to be ignored. Now, it is the most opportune time to put together the existing academic knowledge, and the accumulation of practical wisdom from experienced operators in this field.

### **Conclusion:**

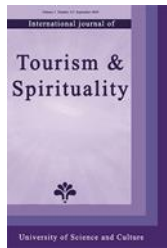
Tourism, as Honey & Gilpin (2009) argue provides regions particularly marginal areas with an opportunity for economic diversification. Remote areas or developing countries with cultural and natural attractions can benefit from tourism development in the form of income generation, job creation, and so on. Therefore, communities with rich history and cultural heritage will be able to apply these unique assets in order to develop spirituality. 'Tourism is the only export sector where the consumer travels to the exporting country that provides opportunities for the poor to become exporters through the sale of goods and services to foreign tourists' (Richardson, 2010). In this paper, the importance of tourism in the development of spirituality was discussed. Undoubtedly, tourism has intangible dimensions with which destinations can develop spirituality in the communities. Both cultural and natural attractions have intangible and spiritual elements that can affect tourists' experiences. Overall, it can be stated that spirituality in tourism is an indispensable issue that cannot be ignored easily. Now, it is the most opportune time to put together the existing academic knowledge, and the accumulation of practical wisdom from experienced operators in this field.

### **References**

- Ashley, C., Roe, D., & Goodwin, H. (2001). *Pro-Poor Tourism Strategies: Making Tourism Work for the Poor*. London: Overseas Development Institute.



- Blomfield, B. (2009). 'Markers of the heart: Finding spirituality in a bus marked tourist', *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 91-106.
- Chee, K. (2002). The heart of leaders: Spirituality in educational administration. Paper presented at the University of Calgary.
- Copan, P. (2001). *That's just your interpretation: Responding to skeptics who challenge your faith*. Holland, MI: Baker Book House.
- Collins, G. (1998). *The soul search: A spiritual journey to an authentic intimacy with God*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Danesh, H.B. (2001). *The psychology of spirituality*. Canada: Nine Pines Publishing.
- Hamilton, D., and Jackson, M. (1998). Spiritual development: Paths and processes. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 25(4), 262-270.
- Holman, C. (2011). 'Surfing for a Shaman: Analyzing an Ayahuasca Website', *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 90-109.
- Honey, M., & Gilpin, R. (2009). *Tourism in the Developing World: Promoting Peace and Reducing Poverty*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace.
- Huitt, W., & Robbins, J. (2003). *An introduction to spiritual development*. Paper presented at the 11th Annual Conference: Applied Psychology in Education, Mental Health, and Business, Valdosta, GA, October 3. Retrieved [date], from <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/papers/spirituality.pdf>
- Levin, J. (2001). *God, faith, and health*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Love, Patrick G. (2002). Comparing Spiritual Development and Cognitive Development. *Journal of College Student Development*, Vol.43, N. 3. P. 357-373.



- 
- Morinis, A. (1992). *The Territory of the Anthropology of Pilgrimage*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Marler, P., & Hadaway, K. (2002). Being religious or being spiritual: A zero-sum proposition? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41(2), 289-300.
- Maslow, A. (1983). *Farther reaches of human nature*. Magnolia, MA: Peter Smith Publishers.
- Milan Ambrož & Rok Ovsenik. (2011). TOURIST ORIGIN AND SPIRITUAL MOTIVES. *Management*, Vol. 16, 2, pp. 71-86
- Parks, S. (2000). *Big questions, worthy dreams: Mentoring young adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Reader, I. (1993). *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Smith, B. (2014). *Spiritual Intelligence: Definitions and Measurements*. Available at: <http://pre-beta.com/clients/zampella/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Spiritual-IntelligenceBarrySmithPaper.pdf>
- Robert B. Richardson (2010). *Tourism and Food Security in Mali*. [http://fsg.afre.msu.edu/promisam\\_2/Tourism\\_and\\_food\\_security\\_in\\_Mali\\_brief.pdf](http://fsg.afre.msu.edu/promisam_2/Tourism_and_food_security_in_Mali_brief.pdf)
- Toln, S. (2002). *Spirituality and the highly gifted adolescent*. Retrieved July 2002, from <http://www.stephanietolan.com/spirituality.htm>.
- UNWTO. (2006). *Poverty Alleviation Through Tourism: A Compilation of Good Practices*. Madrid: United Nations World Tourism Organization.