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Motivation for Pilgrimage

Using theory to explore motivations

Introduction

This article is a discussion of the motivations for pilgrimage and it will draw upon theories of motivation to explore the continuing attraction of pilgrimage in contemporary times.

Before I start to delve further into the issues and the links to relevant theory it is essential to be aware that this discussion is located within the field of Event Management. Event Management is a fast growing discipline which focuses on the design, production and management of planned events, such as festivals, celebrations, conferences, fund-raisers and so on. Clearly pilgrimages, as planned events, fit into this definition. In this context, it is essential to recognise the importance of understanding the motives and needs of event customers so that we can plan to help our customers satisfy their motives. Whilst it might seem abhorrent and commercial to talk of pilgrims as customers, pilgrimages and religious sites, as we will see, have become more and more commodified and increasingly are deemed to need professional management.

Key theories of motivation will be compared in order to identify the prime motivating factors underpinning people's decisions to make pilgrimages. Theories of motivation are divided into content theories or process theories. Content theories, on the one hand, focus on what actually motivates people, seeking to identify and explain the relevant factors. Process theories, on the other hand, emphasise the actual process of motivation, with the aim of identifying the relationship between various dynamic variables, such as values and expectations, which influence individual motivation. Both sets of theory can inform our understanding of motivation in the context of pilgrimage.

Not only is there a greater volume of pilgrims, but an increasing range of pilgrimages—to traditional religious sites and to unusual and secular sites, such as Princess Diana's home in London, Ground Zero, Bob Marley sites,

Dracula sites and so on. Since globally, religiously motivated travel is increasing there is clearly a need for further research.

I am hoping this will be of interest because it is such a fascinating area of study and there are potentially valuable insights from workplace-based studies of motivation that can be transferred to the very different context of pilgrimage. It is intended to show how motivation theories can be used to understand and classify motivations for pilgrimage, which can, in turn, underpin the management of such journeys and events in developing ways to meet the needs of pilgrims on journeys to religious destinations and during their stay at those destinations. It is clearly imperative that, given the rise in this kind of tourism, we understand what motivates pilgrims and to what extent, if at all, and how, their expectations can be met.

Generally, it is agreed that a pilgrimage is a journey deriving from religious causes to a sacred site. It has two elements: the external journey to the sacred site, and the internal journey as a transformative spiritual experience. As noted above, the term 'pilgrimage' is also widely used in broad and secular contexts—for example, pilgrimages to war graves, celebrities' homes, football stadia. (Collins-Kreiner & Kliot 2000.)

It can be argued that, traditionally, the distinguishing features of pilgrimage were that religious involvement was incorporated into the journey and that austerity was involved to a greater or lesser degree. But what do we find today? A quick trawl of the internet for information about pilgrimage reveals a host of advertisements for luxury accommodation, food and amenities for pilgrims both on the journey to, and at, well-known sacred sites. It is not unusual to find facilities described as elegant, luxurious and magnificent!

This is in contrast to the tradition of hardship—such as strenuous walking and labour—that was built into the traditional pilgrimage; early records show that pilgrims (although not always the wealthy) did indeed experience a great deal of hardship. Many pilgrimages in India, for example, incorporate the physical act of carrying artefacts over some distance, such that even children share in the experience, carrying miniature versions.

Furthermore, it is not unusual for pilgrims to deliberately inflict pain on themselves: an example being the pilgrimage to Lhasa's Buddhist temples where pilgrims prostrate themselves flat, standing up at the point reached by their hands, and then repeating these movements in the pilgrimage circuit. Kevin A. Griffin (2007) refers to Dixon Hardy's (1836) rather grim description of a nineteenth century Irish pilgrimage to Holy Island, where pilgrims crawled on their naked knees through rough stones, experiencing agonising pain and lacerations. It was also reported that what was really disliked was the

fact that men came to leer at the female pilgrims, who tucked their skirts up for crawling and, by doing so, exposed intimate parts of their bodies! Quite a different motive for pilgrimage!

Sagar Singh's (2004) study of pilgrimage in India (Hindu and tribal Hindu) supports conventions suggesting that austerity should be incorporated into all aspects of pilgrimage, such as choice of food, places to stay en route, social interaction and so on. He also argues that concern for maintaining the natural and social environment was built into the traditional pilgrimage. Interestingly, this latter issue is becoming a source of concern for pilgrimage management today. Waste, water pollution, overcrowding, the building of facilities, such as hotels, eating places, and souvenir shops, to cater for mass consumption were all identified as major sources of pollution and contamination of the natural environment (Shinde 2007).

Historically and currently, it can be claimed that pilgrimage should have an integrative function, connecting people from diverse cultures and ethnic groups—although Singh's (2004) study indicates that this function is not universally demonstrated in modern India or elsewhere!

Since the dawn of time, it is believed that human beings have defined aspects of their environment as sacred sites endowed with supernatural qualities. Even though the spiritual meaning of some has been lost over time, there is still immense interest all over the world in many ancient sites, such as the statues of Easter Island, Stonehenge in England, Angkor Wat in Cambodia and so on. More and more people are travelling to sacred sites (not always sacred to their own religion, even when they have one), and taking part in religious festivals and events. There are increasing numbers making pilgrimages to their religion's sacred sites. Even the threat of danger does not always deter pilgrims from making the journey to their sacred site. Recent studies of adventure tourism in Nepal found that pilgrimages to Hindu and Buddhist religious sites were less affected than trekking by the threats to personal safety posed by global and internal security matters. (Bhattarai *et al.* 2005.)

This preamble, therefore, leads to my central question: What is it, then, that motivates people from all walks of life, all religions (and none), all cultures to undertake travel to sacred sites?

Motivation

It should be noted that there are limited studies into motivations for pilgrimage: one reason may be because it is a difficult topic to research. When asked,

many pilgrims are not able to articulate their motives, nor may they wish to admit that they need to accumulate merit or remove sin—the traditional reasons for pilgrimage (Mustonen 2005). Motives for visiting sacred sites, however, have been found to affect behaviour: it has been observed that pilgrims, more than other visitors, are more likely to subscribe to overt and covert norms at sites that hold religious significance for themselves; for example, by observing clothing conventions and refraining from taking photographs where this is prohibited.

Even where the prime motivation for pilgrimage is explicitly expressed as religious, it can be seen that motivations and expectations change over time: for example, improved transport facilities and the greater wealth of prospective pilgrims have led to an increasing commodification of sacred sites, thus raising expectations of quality (Shinde 2007).

Definitions of motivation
Motivation can be defined as the driving force that is within all human beings, that is something that commits a person to a course of action (Mullins 2009: 479–518). Without motivation pilgrims would not be able to achieve their spiritual goals. In the context of event management, motivation theories, however, are commonly drawn from studies of workplace motivation, where the focus is on identifying those factors which employers can manipulate to increase employee productivity. Drawing upon that body of knowledge can help us to understand the motivations underpinning pilgrimage, and, furthermore, to transfer that understanding to the context of pilgrimage management—at the planning stage, during the physical journey, and at the destination. There are many competing theories of motivation which aim to explain the nature of motivation. Motivation, as we shall see, is a complex concept and there is no simple or universal answer to the question of what motivates people.

It is intended, therefore, to focus on those motivations theories most relevant to the study of pilgrimage: these can be divided into content theories and process theories. Content theories focus on identifying what it is that actually motivates individuals and aim not only to identify but to explain the factors that motivate people. Process theory emphasises the actual process of motivation, meaning that it aims to identify the relationship between various dynamic variables that influence motivation.

Content theories of motivation

Content theories, therefore, focus on the things that motivate people to act in certain ways: they seek to identify people's needs, then to classify them in order of relative strength, and to identify the goals people follow to satisfy their needs. One of the most popular content theorists, Abraham Maslow (1954), focussed on need as the basis of motivation.

In his theory of individual development and motivation (the hierarchy of needs theory) Maslow (1954) asserted that people's needs can be divided into five different levels in a hierarchy of needs ranging from lower to higher order, such that the individual will satisfy lower order needs before being motivated to satisfy the next level of need. He claimed that once a need was satisfied, it no longer acted as a motivator. The hierarchy develops from the lowest, deficiency needs—physiological, safety, and social or belonging needs—to the higher level growth needs—esteem, and self-actualisation. Table 1 shows examples of the outcomes of satisfying each level of need, ranging from the lowest (at the bottom of the hierarchy) to the highest order.

Although Maslow contended that most people's basic needs do run in this order, the hierarchy of needs is not fixed and will change according to circumstances. Higher order needs may change and extend with the development of societies and their particular form of social relations, which will influence the social norms. Whilst there is little empirical evidence to support Maslow's theory, nevertheless it can provide some insights into the motivations and behaviour of pilgrims. Once potential pilgrims were assured that their physiological needs would be met, for example, it can be surmised that their motivation would shift its focus onto higher level needs, such as the opportunity to increase their esteem and status amongst their religious community by taking part in an arduous and or prestigious pilgrimage. Mustonen (2005), however, argues that context needs to be considered, referring to circumstances where

Table 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (adapted from Maslow 1954).

Needs	Outcomes
Self-actualisation	Achieve full potential, creativity, personal development
Esteem	Gain self-respect, self-esteem, status etc.
Social	Sense of belonging, friendship, affection
Safety	Safety, security, stability, protection
Physiological	Food, water, sleep, healthy environment, sex

fulfilling religious needs might actually belong to the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy: this could occur, for example, where taking part in the rituals of pilgrimage is a means of satisfying social and esteem needs. He also points out that in India pilgrims derive from all classes of society and, as such, for the poorest, meeting higher level needs could take precedence over satisfying lower level needs. At the highest level of motivation the experience of pilgrimage itself would be expected to provide satisfaction of self-actualisation needs. Motives for pilgrimage may always have been multi-faceted: the Wife of Bath (of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*) saw pilgrimage as a means of sourcing husbands whilst travelling in safety, as well as an opportunity to obtain grace!

Frederick Herzberg (1974) was a key influence on theories of motivation—his two-factor theory derived from his research into occupational motivation. Factors influencing people's motivation were classified into two different sets: hygiene factors and motivating factors. He claimed that whilst hygiene factors would not actually motivate people, their absence or inadequacy would lead to feelings of dissatisfaction; the motivating factors being those that would positively motivate the individual. Hygiene factors can be approximated to Maslow's lower level needs and the motivators to the higher level needs.

Hygiene factors were identified as: salary, job security, working conditions, quality of supervision, company policy and administration, and interpersonal relations. The motivators were identified as: sense of achievement, recognition, responsibility, nature of the work, and personal growth and advancement.

Although there are methodological criticisms of Herzberg's two-factor theory, it nevertheless led to a focus on how work could be restructured in order to enable employees to satisfy their higher level needs at work and, hence, increase productivity and quality. Clearly, his ideas have resonance for our understanding of the motives for pilgrimage, and, hence, for pilgrimage management.

Applying Herzberg's ideas, it can be demonstrated how his classification could be applied in the context of pilgrimage: for example, an individual's wage or salary provides the means to afford to travel to pilgrimage destinations and to cover accommodation costs. Sufficient income needs to be accumulated to support the pilgrim (and any family) during their time away from work on pilgrimage. Similarly, if we consider the factor of job security in the context of pilgrimage, we can refer to the need, for example, for security of travel arrangements and personal safety at the destination. Applications can

Table 2. Application of Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation to pilgrimage (adapted from Herzberg 1987: 109–20).

Hygiene factors	Application to pilgrimage	Motivating factors	Application to pilgrimage
Salary	Income to cover pilgrimage costs, time off work.	Sense of achievement	Personal satisfaction in overcoming adversity, the liminoid.
Job security	Security during pilgrimage and at destination.	Recognition	Photograph, certificate, participation in event.
Working conditions	Quality of travel, accommodation, and at destination; conflict-free throughout.	Responsibility	For own spiritual achievement, for others during pilgrimage.
Level/quality of supervision	Guides, couriers, accommodation managers.	Nature of the work	Pilgrimage, experience at sacred site.
Company policy and administration	Policy affecting pilgrimage, administrative efficiency.	Personal growth and advancement	Religious experiences; satisfy spiritual needs; helping others; acquiring survival skills on pilgrimage.
Interpersonal relations	Fellow pilgrims, local inhabitants, staff and volunteers at all sites, travel agents.		

be devised for each of the hygiene factors as shown in Table 2—this application to pilgrimage is not exhaustive, but shown as an exemplar.

As would be expected, some hygiene factors may cause dissatisfaction and demotivation: the physical conditions encountered during travel, for example, may discourage some. As has been demonstrated earlier, others, however, perceive hardship as an integral part of the experience that, in itself, offers an opportunity for personal growth and the development of survival skills. On the other hand, incidents such as crowd surges at Hajj, which have led to hundreds of deaths and injuries amongst pilgrims, have led to fears of demotivational effects. More recently, there have been warnings about the possibility of infection (e.g. swine flu in 2009) and terrorism at mass pilgrimage destinations.

Whilst these theories do seem to provide insight about the classification and application of ideas relevant to the management of pilgrimage, they are, however, open to criticism. First, criticism is focused on the inability to iden-

tify which need is most dominant in an individual at any one time: since each person is different, due to the uniqueness of their experiences and socialisation, it is difficult, therefore, to generalize. Second, it is claimed that content theories may underestimate the effects of social and cultural factors on motivation: in cultures which value the individual over the group a belief that self-actualisation is desirable may be inculcated, whereas in cultures which emphasise the importance of the group above the individual, self-actualisation would be considered an undesirable, selfish goal (Mullins 2009: 479–518).

Despite these weaknesses, Maslow's work is of value as it provides a pragmatic way of classifying the different needs that people try to satisfy through pilgrimage. Similarly, Herzberg's study has relevance to an examination of motivations for pilgrimage through its separation of motivators and dissatisfiers. Their work strongly suggests that pilgrimage managers have a dual responsibility to ensure that the pilgrims' lower level needs (Herzberg's hygiene factors) are met whilst not stifling opportunities to achieve satisfaction of the higher level motivators. Following Glenn Bowdin *et al.* (2007) it is suggested that, despite criticism, these theories can provide a useful framework for consideration of how to structure the whole process of pilgrimage in order to enhance motivation and limit opportunities for dissatisfaction.

Process theories of motivation

Process theories, as stated earlier, emphasise the process of motivation, and, in doing so, identify the relationship between various dynamic variables which influence individual motivation. Process theories do not make assumptions about what motivates people, but focus on how people's needs and wants affect their behaviour. Victor H. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory is probably most relevant to our theme. It asserts that what motivates is the expectation (expectancy) of a particular outcome deriving from their actions. The outcome will result in intrinsic or extrinsic rewards which justify the effort put into taking action. Vroom (1964) used the term 'valence' to define the anticipated satisfaction from an outcome. Expectancy can be seen as the perceived probability that the desired outcome would happen if sufficient effort was put into achieving it. People would be motivated to go on pilgrimage, therefore, if they valued the anticipated outcome sufficiently. The emphasis here is on the anticipated outcome rather than the actual satisfaction.

The criticism that such theories are culturally dependent is common to both content and process theories. In this case, for example, it can be argued that the process by which individuals, whether consciously or unconsciously, rate their preferences in a rational way and then decide how much effort to

put into achieving goals is culturally dependent in that this is a feature of more individualistic cultures rather than more collectivist cultures. So, clearly the societal or cultural context is important in any understanding of motivation. In explaining the role of expectations (expectancy), that is, the link between the individual's perception of the link between effort and reward, process theories, therefore, focus on how people's needs affect their behaviour. Pilgrimage management, like event management, incorporates the control of sometimes very large numbers of people in a contained environment and, hence, knowledge of motivation and associated behavioural outcomes should be incorporated into the planning process. It is interesting, therefore, that, where motivation theory is referred to at all in studies of motivation for pilgrimage, Maslow's ideas are those most frequently cited.

In this context, the value of process theory can be appreciated as an aid to understanding expectations and perceptions and, hence, of being able to develop ways of satisfying expectations. Investigations into expectations would be needed to deepen existing knowledge so that policy could be better informed: such research, it can be assumed from earlier studies, may be limited by the methodological difficulties associated with research into motivation for pilgrimage.

Motives for pilgrimage

Clearly religion is the prime motive for pilgrimage. Religious motive, however, is a complex concept with different layers of meaning and intensity depending on individual belief and social context. Interesting and contentious as this debate surely is, it is outside the scope of this paper and, therefore, it is not intended to delve into this further here.

It can be said with certainty, however, that whilst religion is the underlying motivation for pilgrimage, other motives are often evident: in earlier times, pilgrimages were perceived as opportunities for adventure, personal advancement, the creation of wealth, and for the exchange of intellectual ideas and practical information (such as building techniques, trading opportunities), as exemplified, for example, by medieval Crusades to the Holy Land. Jonathon Sumption (1975) refers to contemporary accounts of the desire for travel to unknown places, motivated by curiosity. Even modern day pilgrimages provide opportunities for adventure, as many pilgrimage sites are located in remote areas, reached only by several days' travel by foot. An account by Conrad Rudolph (2004: 100–1) on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, refers to the problems of finding a place to stay, considering it part of the fun of pilgrimage! At one point during the pilgrimage he recounts how he was taken by the stunning beauty of the woman serving dinner.

Motivation for pilgrimage has been historically linked with religious conflict: many pilgrimages in the Middle Ages followed declarations by Popes about the need to gain revenge for alleged desecration of Christian religious sites. Furthermore, religious practice can be seen to have influenced both motivation for pilgrimage and the experience of pilgrimage; for example, the Catholic Church's granting of indulgences in the Middle Ages affected people's motivation for pilgrimage—Sumption (1975) asserted that an unintended effect of this practice was a weakening of spiritual motivation even though the primary motive was forgiveness of sin. There was no need for the hardship of pilgrimage when people could buy their way out of sin! Of course, for many in the Middle Ages, pilgrimage was the only valid reason for travel.

It can be seen, therefore, that motivation for pilgrimage is complex, multi-faceted, and multi-layered. Pilgrimage management needs to be aware that pilgrims' expectations of the experience will be higher than those of other visitors and should respond accordingly. This is clearly explained by the more intense motivation of pilgrims observed in Yaniv Poria *et al.*'s (2003) study of visitors to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, where it was found that Jewish pilgrims' motivations were derived from the expectation of an emotional experience as the site was part of their own heritage, whereas Christian visitors' motivations derived from the site being an historic tourist attraction. Motivation, furthermore, can change when the individual switches activities, for example, from being a pilgrim to a tourist and vice-versa, often without the individual being aware of the change.

Commodification

Whilst, historically, commercial trade has developed around some sacred sites, the tendency to maximise opportunities presented by visitors to sacred sites is a growing phenomenon in the modern world. Although this is nothing new—pilgrimages have usually brought opportunities for trade—the pressure to maximise opportunities to raise income from sacred sites is increasing, as can be seen by anecdotal reports of destination managers being urged to put profits first! Alongside this is the development of another trend—that of creating purpose-built religious tourism attractions on non-sacred sites. Such religious theme parks as the Holy Land Experience in Florida, have the 'attraction' of providing the experience without the inconvenience of long journeys, smells, dirt, illness, crowds, 'foreign' food and so on, and without exposure to environmental or political danger.

Interestingly, Griffin (2007) refers to rows of shining SUVs in the car park at an Irish pilgrimage site leading him to ask whether pilgrimage is a fashion parade demonstrating people's wealth. Clearly, then, another, baser, motive for pilgrimage can be surmised, which represents the complete antithesis of spiritual motivation for pilgrimage. In this context, L. Melwani (2001), referring to Hindu travel to sacred sites in India, cites the multilayered nature of motivation for such travel, referring to the satisfaction of both the spiritual and the secular where devotion, opportunities for families to bond and vacation fun are portrayed as part of the experience.

Similarly, Rajandeep Singh (2000) reported that wealthier pilgrims preferred to go on pilgrimage to places which had become better known through the religious literature. This clearly suggests that motivation for pilgrimage can be seen, in these instances, as multi-layered: although primarily motivated by the need to gain religious merit, this is tempered by the desire to travel and, possibly, underpinned by the desire to demonstrate difference from poorer pilgrims who would not be able to afford more expensive travel opportunities. This is not to say that such secular reasons motivate all pilgrims, but that it may be so in some cases and could even be a subconsciously held motive. As people spent more time travelling, they were able to combine pilgrimage with travelling and holidays (Singh 2000).

It has been argued that one of the functions of pilgrimage is to enable all participants to feel a sense of equality and equity with their fellow pilgrims, so that socio-economic backgrounds or states of health were no longer relevant or distinguishers. Interestingly, such claims were made for carnivals. Mikhail Bakhtin (1984: 10) observed that traditionally, during carnival, barriers such as age, caste, or wealth were ignored so that relations between people were not bound by former conventions. Mustonen (2005) reinforces such claims in the case of Indian pilgrimages.

However, as has been briefly referred to earlier, there are concerns that modern day pilgrimages are becoming very different from the traditional pilgrimage. Shinde's (2007) study of Indian pilgrimage and the environment echoes this theme. Increasing numbers of visitors to sacred sites, Shinde argued, do bring about qualitative changes in the nature of pilgrimages—changes such as limited engagement of pilgrims with rituals, organising the pilgrimage more like a package tour, applying modern marketing techniques, and the way pilgrims behave more like consumers. It was noted that pilgrimage was seen as an opportunity to get away from everyday living and, hence, visitors to sacred sites brought with them their urbanised consumerist values, rather than reverting to the simpler values traditionally associated with pil-

grimage. It would not be surprising, therefore, if the purely spiritual motivation for pilgrimage were not affected by such change. It could be surmised that either primarily spiritual motives would be contaminated by commercial development, or the opposite could occur, whereby spiritual motives were strengthened as a reaction against such commercialisation: this may be a fruitful area for further research.

Elsewhere, the influence of the real world context is used to explain motivation for pilgrimage: Nelson H. Graburn (1989: 21–6), for example, referring to the liminoid, argues that the return to, and impact of, real life provides recurrent motivation for people to continue to go on pilgrimage. Mustonen (2005), comparing volunteer tourism and pilgrimage, refers to external motivations, that is the influence of the external world shaping individual motivations and refers to the increasing insecurity of the external world as being as a motivating factor. Alienation, therefore, in these circumstances, might be seen as underpinning the more explicitly stated motivation for pilgrimage. Jacqueline Mulligan (2007) raises similar concerns as she cites examples of advertising literature and travel guides using religious allusions to promote the idea of getting away from it all in an earthly paradise. To draw upon a Marxist concept, pilgrimage can be seen, perhaps, as providing a heart within a heartless world.

Concluding remarks

In summing up, then, and going back to my original theme—the motivation for pilgrimage—it can be seen that that, in our contemporary worlds, pilgrimage continues to be a growing phenomenon. Motivation for pilgrimage is many-faceted, even though individual pilgrims may be unaware of the complexity of their motivations and/or may be unable or unwilling to articulate their reasons. Studies show that motivation, whether made explicit or not, does indeed affect behaviour on pilgrimage in different contexts. Motivation theories, particularly the content theories of Maslow and Herzberg, despite some limitations, can help to classify motivations for pilgrimage, whilst process theories can facilitate an understanding of the behaviour of pilgrims. It is essential that managers of events such as pilgrimages understand what motivates pilgrims so that they can help them satisfy both spiritual and secular needs without, hopefully, damaging the world's sacred sites. In this context, the increasing commercialisation of sacred sites creates challenges for us all.

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