Applying Ansoff's growth strategy matrix to Consumer Segments and Typologies in Spiritual Tourism

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The purpose of this paper is to develop strategies for the effective marketing of spiritual tourism. It explores the relevance of marketing strategies by Ansoff to a typology model for spiritual tourism. The typology model was based upon the work of four well known authors of tourism and was used in this paper to investigate various marketing strategies suggested by Ansoff. Qualitative approach was adopted and in-depth interviews were conducted with the tourism operators and spiritual tourists in Australia and Pakistan. The general observations of this original study were that the high involvement spiritual tourists could be further targeted by emphasising market penetration and product development strategies. Market development and product development strategies could be adopted for other medium-to-low intensity tourists and the least interested consumers could become involved by operators applying some highly targeted diversification strategies. Due to the qualitative nature of this study the findings could not be quantified and that has been specified as the future research direction.

Field of Research: Marketing Strategy, Spiritual Tourism

1. Introduction

The term "spiritual tourism" is infrequently heard of in both the academic literature and the tourism trade press, yet more people visit Mecca, the Vatican and/or Bethlehem/Jerusalem per year than attend the World Cups or Olympics, for example. In modern studies of tourism, 'spiritual tourism' has been increasingly suggested to include both religious tourism and pilgrimage (Cohen, 2006; Hall, 2006; Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005; Haq & Jackson, 2006a). Religious tourism encourages the tourist to travel to fulfil his/her own specific religion's obligation (Cohen, 1996; Gladstone, 2006; Vukonic', 1996). Whereas a pilgrim travels like a religious tourist but with a more organised itinerary and a journey following a schedule of destinations and practices as if they were an original pilgrim (Raj & Morpeth, 2007; Swatos & Tomasi, 2002).

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To develop strategies for the effective marketing of spiritual tourism, the spiritual tourists need to be identified to analyse their behaviour and attitudes. Hence there is a need to build a workable typology of spiritual tourists and logically the typologies need to be targeted with different marketing strategies. As spiritual tourism markets have been and are still strong growth opportunities, it is appropriate that this be viewed through the lens of Ansoff, the father figure of growth strategy theory. The literature review indicates massive gaps in the study of spiritual tourist typologies and the application of relevant marketing strategies. In this paper the Ansoff matrix (Figure 3) strategies will be applied to various segments for its potential relevance to effective marketing of spiritual tourism based upon the series of interviews conducted with the spiritual tourists and tourism operators in Australia and Pakistan. The contrasting cultures of both countries were chosen to provide an objective approach to this study. Various prominent authors have acknowledged the support of Ansoff's matrix for effective marketing of tourism products and services (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Holloway, 2004; Evans, Campbell & Stonehouse 2003; Kotler et al., 2003).

## 2. Literature Review

2.1 Spiritual Tourism

It has been observed by various authors that spirituality in general has recently become an important subject of research in social and business areas (Cimino & Lattin, 1999; Hill, 2002; Konz & Ryan, 1999; Pesut, 2003). The interest in spirituality has affected a number of industries around the world (Mitroff & Denton, 1999), including the tourism industry (Cohen, 2006; Gladstone, 2005; Timothy and Iverson, 2006). Spiritual tourism seems to be a new concept but it is certainly not a new phenomenon (Brown, 1998; Burton, 1855; Straitwell, 2006). Based on the review of the literature, the interviews with stakeholders in Australia and Pakistan, and the research work of Haq and Bretherton (2005); Haq and Jackson (2006 a, b and c), this study defines a spiritual tourist as 'someone who visits a specific place out of his/her usual environment, with the intention of spiritual meaning and/or growth, without overt religious compulsion, which could be religious, non-religious, sacred or experiential in nature, but within the Divine context, regardless of the main reason for travelling'.

2.2 The Typology model for spiritual tourism

A predominant theory of marketing argues that every market consists of groups or 'segments' of customers with different needs and demands (Bowen & Clarke, 2002; Bowen, 1998; Ladkin, 2000). It should be noted here that segments are unlikely to be mutually exclusive, and this would also apply to spiritual tourism. To further identify the spiritual tourist and analyse his/her purchasing behaviour, there is a need to build a typology of the spiritual tourist. The typology model for spiritual tourism (Haq and Jackson, 2006a) was derived from the tourism and tourist segments studies conducted by Cohen (1996), McKercher (2002), MacKay and Fesenmaier (1998) and Smith (1992).

Smith (1992, p.5) concludes from her research on tourism and pilgrimage that these two terms are opposite end-points on a continuum of travel as indicated in her diagram below:

Figure 1 – Stages of Religious Tourism

Pilgrimage		*Religious tourism*		*Tourism*
a	b	c	d	e

sacred	*faith/profane* (knowledge-based)	*secular*
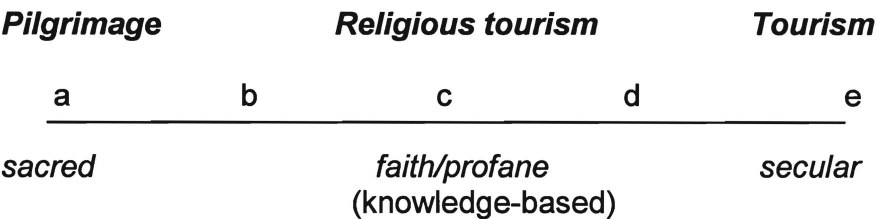
Source: Smith (1992, p.5)

Smith claims that these positions reflect the multiple and changing motivations of the traveller, whose interests and activities may switch from tourist to pilgrim and vice versa. The central area (c) in Figure 1 is called by Smith as 'religious tourism', where the sacred and the secular combine and where the tourists enjoy a knowledge-based decision making position. The model does not identify the area (c) as a reflection of a group of tourists and faith/profane does not indicate any specific attitude or behaviour. In this study it is suggested that all positions along the continuum (from position 'a' to 'd') are taken by different types of spiritual tourists from this paper's core typologies as in Figure 2.

The Venn-Diagram created by Haq and Jackson (2006b) presents three spheres combining the range of tourists' buying behaviour have been labelled 'purposefulness', 'existentialism' and 'regular maintenance'. The strongest involvement and behaviour, the 'sacred centre', is the overlap between the circles and is identified as number 1. This area also includes the positions a, b or c as given by Smith (1992) (though not necessarily in terms of purchasing receptive power or size of market segments). The areas covered by number 2, indicate the people who are very interested in spiritual tourism and are looking for the best destinations. From Smith's diagram they are designated (abc) since they are the hard core pilgrims who have been regularly visiting their religious sites and they could be convinced to visit other similar sites with a spiritual motive. The area with number 3 belongs to people who are looking for new reasons or motives for their travels; they are regular tourists and can be convinced to try the new types of 'spiritual' tourism. They are given the designation (bc) according to Smith, since they have more sacred than secular intentions in their broader journeys. On the inner-periphery of the large outer circle are the tourists who have done very little contemplation of a spiritual tourism experience. They are designated number 4 and are also identified as (d) according to Smith since they seem to be more tourists than pilgrims. Outside the model are those tourists who do not qualify: those who never contemplate such a spiritual purchase or experience, and those who are only interested in purely hedonistic tourism and are 'secular tourists' (e) according to Smith.

Figure 2 - Typology Model for Spiritual Tourism

Source: (Haq & Jackson, 2006b)

2.3 Marketing strategies for spiritual tourism

Despite all international crises, in 2005, the tourism arrivals reached an all time high of 800 million with a rise of 5.5%, it is also estimated that by 2020, people will travel three times more than nowadays (World Tourism Organization, 2007). Tourism has been ranked as one of the fastest growing industries in the world and the largest industry in terms of employment, with 1 out of 16 employees world-wide, and it also ranks in the top two or three industries in almost all countries (Mowlana & Smith, 1993). Developing countries are recognizing the tourism sector's potential contribution to national development goals, particularly by creating employment opportunities, stimulating small businesses and reducing poverty (Conrad & Barreto, 2005). Obviously the significance of the marketing of tourism products and services has been dominant among other operational aspects of the tourism business. A number of public and private tourism organisations have been aggressively marketing tourism and services at national and international levels. Even then, various researchers have noticed a lack of academic work on the marketing of tourism (Chon & Olson, 1990; Faulkner, 1993; Riege & Perry, 2000).

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As part of the research on marketing strategies, the strategies given in Ansoff's matrix will be critically utilised in this paper. Among the four alternatives given in the matrix (Ansoff, 1987) market and product development are the most relevant logically, though market penetration and diversification could also be adopted at both the extreme ends of the spiritual tourists' intensity.

Figure 3 - Ansoff Matrix

	Existing Products	New Products
Existing Markets	Market Penetration	Product Development
New Markets	Market Development	Diversification

Source: Ansoff (1987)

3. Methodology

The methodology adopted for this paper is based on the research conducted by Richardson and Dennis (2003) when they applied Ansoff to the vineyards in UK. In a similar fashion, suitable marketing strategies were considered for various spiritual tourist segments. This application has been based upon the 35 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with tourist operators and spiritual tourists in Australia and Pakistan.

The ontology of critical realism was adopted to conduct the interviews and analyse their findings (Guba & Lincoln 2003). The information collected in the interviews was used to apply the marketing strategies from Ansoff's matrix to the customer segments and typologies as given in the Figure 1. Purposeful and snowballing sampling was used to reach the respondents and the interviews were conducted in the offices of the respondents. The earlier interviews were not allowed to be recorded so notes were taken for all interviews and the transcripts were reconfirmed with the respondents. The transcripts were read many times for the content analysis to find the ideas of the respondents relevant to the discussion in this paper on the market strategies for spiritual tourist typologies.

4. Discussion & Analysis

In terms of spiritual tourism product/services, after the data collection and analysis each quadrant could be defined as follows:

- Market penetration strategies are those designed to get one's existing spiritual tourists to buy and experience the same spiritual tourism products/services more often, or recommend among the peers for group or individual spiritual journeys, for example, in the company of close family members and friends. The market penetration strategies apply directly to the spiritual tourists belonging to area '1abc' of the model. For example, a young

IT professional in Pakistan discussed about his regular annual visits to the 'Ijtima' in Raiwind where nearly 2 million people gather for three days, stay together and discuss Islamic issues (Raiwind, 2006). He said: "I never miss the ijtima and wish that it had more days or was organised twice yearly".

- Market development strategies are those designed to get new market segments of tourists to try one's existing range of spiritual tourism products/services. For example, getting Christian spiritual tourists not yet catered for who are visiting Bethlehem and Jerusalem to experience/buy Muslim and Jewish tours and site-visits already being offered by spiritual tourism operators to extend their stay and experience (Collins-Kreiner et al 2006). These strategies would apply to spiritual tourists in area '2abc'. One Christian Lecturer in Australia said: "whenever I go to North Sydney to the tomb of Marry Mckillop I wish there was a package that could enable me to visit the Mosque in Auburn or the Baha'i Temple in Ingleside".

- Product development strategies are those where the tourism operator designs, tailors or offers new spiritual tourism products/services/experiences to their regular customers. For example, offering a special seminar or conference in Dubai entitled 'Love and Tolerance: the common theme of all 3 Abrahamaic religions' to existing Christian, Jewish and Muslim market segments. This strategy would apply particularly to the spiritual tourists falling in area '3bc'. Since Dubai is a popular destination for festival tourism (Anwar & Sohail, 2004) and attracts tourists from globally diversified backgrounds (Henderson, 2006), Spiritual Festivals could be organised to attract spiritual tourists for learning and understanding various spiritual traditions. A Pakistani eye-specialist claimed: "when I went to Colombo on a conference I was pleased to see that the conference people had organised a city tour including visit to the city's largest Temple and the sacred Hill, Adam's Foot".

- Diversification strategies could be used to offer new spiritual tourism products/services to new market segments. For example, the Muslim pilgrims completing Hajj or Umrah could be invited to attend seminars on maintaining or improving the benefits of Hajj/Umrah in cities such as Dubai or Abu-Dhabi. Another example could be to organise seminars on spiritual poetry from Gibran or Maulana Rumi in cities such as Dubai. Diversification would apply to tourists in area '4d', though we believe in the examples given that these would appeal to high involvement regular and occasional tourists as well. One Pakistani house manager stated: "I love shopping, if there is a spiritual centre in the shopping mall then I may go inside".

Interestingly, those closest to the 'sacred centre', and with the strongest commitments to spiritual tourism as they had experienced it, were also the prime candidates for market penetration strategies because of their high-involvement and loyalty to the one particular product (Hajj or the Vatican). Although intensely interested in spirituality and spiritual tourism, they were really focussed on the latter and not on the former more broadly. For example, many Australians attended the National Interfaith Festival in Maleny (Queensland), March 2007. One Christian lady who came from Gladstone said, "this gathering of various religions on a universal spirituality is so enlightening, I wish it could be organised twice every year". A well known Hajj Travel Agent said: "Thanks to Allah that

Umrah goes throughout the year, if it happened occasionally like Hajj then there would not be as many tourism operators in Pakistan".

However, within the inner circle of the Venn-diagram, there are clearly good opportunities for product development, as many respondents indicated strong interests in trying new experiences within their own particular religious denominations. This is epitomised by the respondents, for example one middle-aged Doctor said, "I travel to Lahore every year with my family to see my parents, every time I want to visit the two popular Sufi shrines for my spiritual tuning but could not manage. If a package was available that could include a day trip to the shrines then I would be very happy, I am sure many of my colleagues visiting Lahore would also buy that package". Similarly, some Academics being interviewed at conferences in Australia also indicated that they would like to visit local spiritual centres if they were aware of any flexible packages available. Many Australian parents also said that if the spiritual ceremonies were organised during school holidays then their families would plan to attend them. As mentioned earlier, the completely hedonistic tourists could also be targeted by diversifying the travel packages. The director of the National Interfaith Festival in Maleny expressed her view on this idea, "to attract a broader community we are planning to link the festival with the Australian Zoo, we may offer entry discounts to visitors who come to the festival right from the Australian Zoo with the same day's ticket".

5. Conclusion

This paper has presented the view that enormous potential exists for both market development and diversification in particular, but also the other two quadrants to a slightly lesser degree, especially in the larger and less-intense market segments that may constitute the greater proportion of the population. In other words, whilst the extremely high involvement and highly loyal spiritual tourists in the centre will be 'loyal customers' and 'brand champions' for their particular religious cause (thus emphasising greater market penetration and product development closely related to their existing spiritual tourism preferences and buying habits). The greater population (with all its innumerable market segments) are known to have spiritual interests and thus are prime candidates for market development and diversification strategy efforts that are highly targeting to their needs and interests.

6. Suggestions for further research

One worthwhile study would obviously involve an attempt to quantify each of these strategic opportunity areas across Ansoff's matrix, as well as the major customer segments in the Venn diagram. In addition, once the more lucrative areas are identified, it would be wise to examine the best approaches to take by different strategies in terms of their size, resources, networks and philosophies.

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