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**MASTER  
IN ECONOMIA  
E MANAGEMENT  
DELLE ATTIVITÀ  
TURISTICHE  
E CULTURALI**

# **“Religious tourism and the evolution of religious accommodation”**

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# Introduction

- The lesson presents the topic of religious tourism widely considered as one of the most important historical antecedents of modern tourism, and still relevant in terms of number of travelers and turnover.
- Through this lesson, specific knowledge is acquired about the main features of religious tourism and pilgrimages and about the evolution of religious accommodation over time.
- The learning outcome of this lesson is twofold: i) the understanding of religious tourism and pilgrimages as tourism products, thus implying both tourism offering and demand with specific characteristics; ii) the comprehension of a new sustainability-oriented hospitality model.

# Agenda

1. **Relationship between tourism and religion**
2. **Religious tourism and pilgrimage**
  - ✓ Similarities
  - ✓ Differences
  - ✓ Pilgrims quotes
  - ✓ Main characteristics
  - ✓ Main issues
3. **Religious accommodation**
  - ✓ Demand of religious accommodation
  - ✓ Accommodation offering
  - ✓ Renewal and launch of religious accommodations in Rome
  - ✓ Development of religious accommodations in Rome
4. **Conclusion**

# Relationship between tourism and religion (I)

The relationship between tourism and religion is

- 1. Historical**
- 2. Social**
- 3. Economic**

# Historical relationship (I)

- Traveling for religious purpose is considered one of the most important historical antecedents of modern tourism;
- Archaeologists and anthropologists have identified traces of pilgrimages in tribal societies of all continents and in the first great civilizations of history.

*(Roussel, 1954 and 1972; Rinschede, 1992; Battilani, 2001; Digance, 2003)*

# Historical relationship (II)

- The era between the XII and XIII centuries represented **the apogee of the Christian pilgrimage** because it involved a growing mass of faithful, gaining also a strong social prestige.
- The **pilgrimage** was not only a religious practice, but a real institution which social recognition: the pilgrim embarked on his/her journey with the approval of all society as well as the law protection. Before leaving, he/she could draw up his/her will, indicating the length of his absence after which he would be considered dead. Furthermore, the laws of the various states punished with particular severity those who robbed and assaulted pilgrims (even more severe were the ecclesiastical sanctions).
- At the same time, **pilgrimage was also one of the punishments** imposed by civil courts against those who committed sins against the church. In this way, in fact, it was possible to keep the condemned person away from the city and there were no costs for the community. Quite often these “particular” pilgrims travelled with their shoulders, arms, and legs tied with chains.

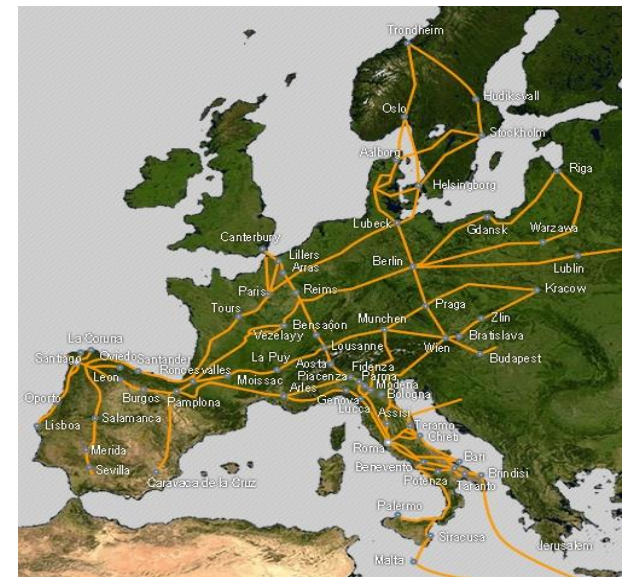
# Historical relationship (III)

- The great epoch of medieval pilgrimages ended in the XIV century when they were no longer imposed by sentence and when travels were considered related not only to religious purpose but also to pure pleasure reasons.
- In the Middle Ages, the pilgrimage was able to combine religion, culture, society, favouring the meeting (not always peaceful) between people.

# Social relationship

- Medieval pilgrims on their way to Rome (and to Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela as well) have had a strong impact to the European geography.
- They traced an increasingly visible network of roads, creating plots, encounters, exchanges of values, laying the foundations and giving life – through mutual knowledge, dialogue, and human relationships – to the common values of Christian culture.

*“Europe was born in pilgrimage, and its  
mother tongue is Christianity”*  
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)





# Economic relationship

- Along pilgrims' paths, some monastic orders favoured the creation of refreshment, care, and prayer places.
- Pilgrims could count on a network of assistance services: churches, monasteries, accommodation, hospices, hospitals, and inns, many of the which are still visible nowadays.
- This allowed the birth of new countries and cities; bridges and roads were built, favouring the commercial and economic growth and development of some areas, together with their historical, artistic, and cultural level.

# Religious tourism and pilgrimage: similarities

Religious tourism and pilgrimage share similarities from an economic, technical and organizational point of view.

•**Economic similarities:** Religious tourism and pilgrimage are both phenomena organized by private companies, non-profit entities (also secular), organizations belonging to various and different confessions, which give rise to the production, sale, and consumption of goods and services. They share the same infrastructure, means, and cultural heritage.

•**Technical and organizational similarities:** Organizations specialized in religious tourism services as well as those devoted to pilgrimages are: 1) customer-oriented; 2) they cater to a type of clientele that traditionally relies on autonomous forms of organization, which generally does not demand high-level hospitality and that is looking for experiences that satisfy the desire to visit sacred places and/or to participate in a religious event; and, 3) they offer packages of goods and services to which should be added the experiential component, the spiritual content and an adequate accompaniment of visitors.

# Religious tourism and pilgrimage: differences (I)

The fact that there are two different terms (i.e., religious tourism and pilgrimage) highlights that there are differences between these two realities, which are similar but not identical.

Thus, a distinction can be made, and it can be done by taking into account the reasons (motivations) behind the travel.

The tourist is not only the one who travels for pleasure:

*«The superficial view that tourists travel solely for pleasure has been questioned for several decades, and it is now acknowledged that there are many complex reasons why people [...] elect to travel»* Digance e Cusack (2002, p. 265)

# Religious tourism and pilgrimage: differences (II)

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has identified the main reasons attributable to different forms of tourism:

- (i) holidays, leisure and recreation;
- (ii) visiting friends and relatives;
- (iii) education and training;
- (iv) health and medical care;
- (v) religion/pilgrimages;**
- (vi) shopping;
- (vii) transit;
- (viii) other.

(UN Statistical Division, 2010, p. 24)

# Religious tourism and pilgrimage: differences (III)

Adler (1989) was the first to consider tourism and pilgrimage as two ends of a continuum.

However, it is to the seminal work of Valene L. Smith (1992) – one of the most quoted on the topic – that we must recognize the merit of having identified, within the above-mentioned continuum, different types of travellers according to the possible combinations of travel motivation; thus giving emphasis to the "motivation" factor.

# Religious tourism and pilgrimage: differences (IV)

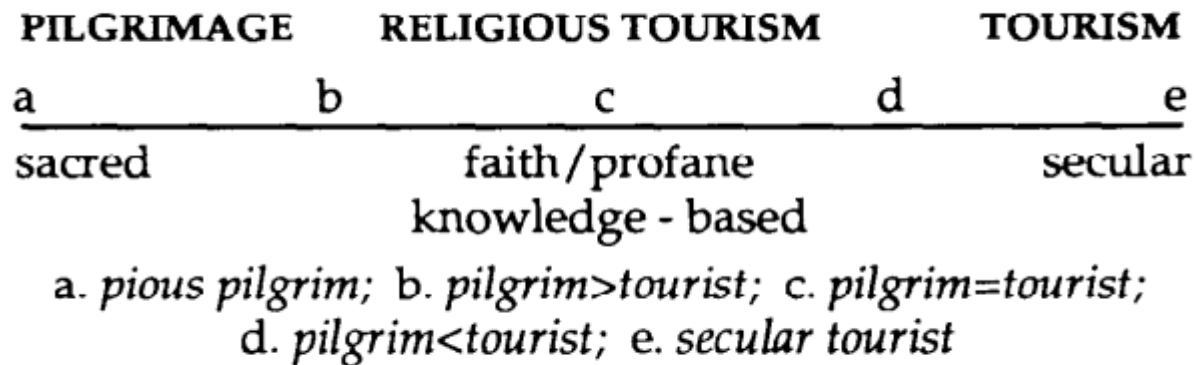


Figure 1. The Pilgrim-Tourist Path

- At the one end, there is the traveller animated by spiritual motivation, namely a “pilgrim” (a);
- At the other extreme, there is the traveller driven by the secular motivation, namely a “tourist” (e);
- In the middle, there is the traveller animated by a combination of the two aforementioned reasons (spiritual and secular) that the author associates with the figure of the “religious tourist” (c).
- Along the continuum it is also possible to verify configurations in which the spiritual motivation prevails compared to the secular one (i.e., more pilgrim than tourist – “b”) or where the secular motivation prevails respect to the spiritual one (i.e., more tourist than pilgrim – “d”).

# Religious tourism and pilgrimage: differences (V)

- We can refer to “religious tourism” when a tourist goes to a place – identifiable as religious – driven by historical, religious, social, cultural and/or artistic interest.
- Religiously motivated tourism refers to religion because it benefits from its spaces and objects.





# Religious tourism and pilgrimage: differences (VI)

- Pilgrims are driven by a strictly religious motivation.
- They want to know the places where the memory of a saint or an extraordinary religious event is kept and they decide to go on a pilgrimage driven by the search for “new horizons” and to have an experience that could give “meaning” to their existence.
- This motivation contrasts with the one that pushes people to go on vacation for "fun/pleasure" and is reflected in the pilgrims' mood when they return from the pilgrimage.



# Pilgrims quotes

*“You don't go to Lourdes for tourism. It is a journey in oneself, of prayer and meditation. The spectacle of thousands of people who came from all over the world to honour Our Lady, to seek peace, fills the heart with joy. The atmosphere is calm; pilgrims walk and pray in the Sanctuary area, visit the Grotto, confess and participate in masses which are celebrated continuously in all languages. Many (like me) experience the shocking experience in the spring water and each one experiences different sensations, but all regenerating. In Lourdes, at times, it seems to be reborn.”*

*“Certainly each of us left already motivated, some with requests for grace, some with thanks to the Madonna, some in spiritual search. It is certain that nobody returns home in the same way he left. Fatima is not a place from which to return indifferent. It touches the heart to see people of all nationalities pray together as one heart and one soul, albeit in the difference of languages.”*

*“I didn't make a vow; simply twenty-five years ago I had heard of the sanctuaries of Lourdes and Fatima and left to personally experience what I had heard about it; now I can't help but organize myself periodically to leave.”*

# Religious tourism: main characteristics (I)

- The phenomenon of religious tourism is a phenomenon with a high demand potential, in continuous evolution, and little dependent on the economic situation.
- Worldwide, travellers to places of faith are around 300-330 million per year. There are approximately 600 million of national and international religious trips (40% are made in Europe).
- The annual turnover is equal to €18 billion at global level and to €4.5 billion in Italy.

*(Data source: World Tourism Organization, 2008, 2011)*

# Religious tourism: main characteristics (II)

## Destinations

- In Italy 70% of the historical, cultural-architectural, and artistic heritage is kept among: basilicas and churches (around 30,000), diocesan museums (around 700), sanctuaries (around 230), monasteries, convents, and buildings of worship.

## Religious tourism demand

- Religious tourist profile (Italian)
  - ✓ people between 40 and 60 years (40%);
  - ✓ people between 20 and 40 years of age (31%);
  - ✓ over 60 and under 20 (25% and 4% respectively).
- Period: mainly spring and autumn
- Duration: 1 overnight stay
- Type of accommodation: 3-star hotel and non-hotel facilities

# Religious tourism: main characteristics (III)

From the point of view of the territories: religious tourism is an opportunity to enhance territories in collaboration with local policy makers.

Religious tourism and pilgrimage:

- have strategic relevance for the tourism sector and for destinations;
- offer favourable business opportunities
- enhance the history, art, and traditions of places
- reconcile man with nature
- educate for peace.

In this perspective, the sustainable aspect of the religious tourism (and pilgrimage) emerges.

# Pilgrimage: main characteristics (I)

- The pilgrimage is a sacred journey, it is an experience of faith, of prayer, a journey of the soul (not just moving physically).
- It is a complex experience, which starts when you step out of your house.
- Today, traveling is “fast” and we use to do not pay attention to the “journey” but only to the arrival moment; whilst, in pilgrimage what it is important is to make an adequate preparation before leaving or during the trip.

## Pilgrimage: main characteristics (II)

- The pilgrimage often escape official tourism statistics despite it is a very important phenomenon that attract many people worldwide (each region in Christian countries has numerous shrines)
- In one year there are 12 million pilgrims who go to Guadalupe; 6 million in Lourdes; 4 million in San Giovanni Rotondo.

Source: "The Journey of Life. The pilgrimage", 2012

# Pilgrimage: main characteristics (III)

## **Pilgrimage destinations:**

- Rome, Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela
  - Places where relics have been found
  - Places where apparitions occurred
  - Places where a religious who was buried in life has acquired a certain fame and great prestige
  - Places where miraculous events have occurred
- ✓ Randomness in the occurrence of some events in certain areas (such as apparitions) and related need to develop activities in order to turn the area into a destination making it accessible (Physical, economic, social, political-bureaucratic accessibility)

# Pilgrimage: main characteristics (IV)

The average profile of the pilgrim is outlined as follows:

- Gender: 57% are women
- Age: between 51 and 65 years(42%); over 65 years (32%); between 36 and 50 years (15%); between 26 and 35 (5%); between 18 and 25 years (6%)
- Marital status: 69% married; 28% unmarried; 3% priests and religious; 35% of the total have children
- Educational qualification: 19% primary degree; 14% university degree; 38% secondary degrees; 2% Postgraduate qualification; 28% Middle school diploma.
- Occupation: pensioners (42%); clerks - including religious (16%); housewives (18%); self-employed workers (7%); workers and craftsmen (8% and 2%, respectively); managers and entrepreneurs (3% and 4%, respectively)



# Pilgrimage: main characteristics (V)

## THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

For pilgrimages and for pilgrims, volunteers play a very important role.

*“The volunteers who regulate the influx and help the pilgrims are kind, always with a smile, understanding. Every evening there is a procession with torches, in which thousands participate, splendid in composure and in songs.”*

Source: Testimony of a pilgrim

# Pilgrimage: main characteristics (VI)

## The “ancient” pilgrim:

- Used to left leaving everything behind, made a will and greeted everyone, knew when he/she would leave, but not when he/she would return;
- Was driven by religious reasons;
- Knew that he/she had to face many dangers and that he/she could even risk his life (the greatest risks were represented by brigands, diseases, populations hostile to Christians);
- had a specific way of dressing that was identifying the pilgrim *status*.

## The “modern” pilgrim:

- Used to left for a precise and defined period of time, sometimes a path is divided into two or more years;
- The motivations can vary: spiritual, inner growth, with the intention of making a meaningful experience for his/her existence, meet with different cultures, etc.
- Runs different risks than yesterday, paradoxically as there are no longer many people walking on foot, the territories are not prepared to welcome walkers, so dangers arise from traffic and territories do not offer widespread services for this target of travellers;
- Concerning the way of dressing: everyday clothes are used, the tradition has been somewhat lost, even if today various organizations produce typical gadgets in memory of the ancient pilgrim status.

# Pilgrimage: main characteristics (VI)

## **The “ancient” accommodation:**

- Those who welcomed pilgrims in the past, especially on the Camino de Santiago, experienced welcoming pilgrims as something sacred (it was like welcoming Jesus) and this is why the accommodation was usually free or at low cost.
- Those who dared to harm pilgrims were punished by law.

## **The “modern” accommodation:**

- It can be compared to the normal tourists accommodation. However, according to the ancient accommodation tradition, "poor hospitality" is also spreading (where the help of volunteers is crucial). In this vein, the Camino de Santiago represents an organizational model, where former pilgrims volunteer in shelters to provide assistance in the reception and maintenance of farmhouses. Thanks to this ancient solidarity, the possibility of finding free or low-cost accommodation persists today.

## Religious tourism and Pilgrimage: main issues (I)

It is not easy to understand (and to quantify) those who visit a destination as a pilgrim, religious tourist or secular tourist → In fact, often a destination can attract all these three types of tourist.

In Italy, the available data reveal:

- religious tourism accounts for the 1.5% on the total of tourist flows;
- There is a total of 5.6 million of arrivals;
- There is a prevalence of foreigners (60%);
- Tourist decide to travel mainly during low season.

Source: Isnart, 2011

## Demand of religious accommodation

Religious tourists of Christian faith prefer to stay overnight in facilities located near places of worship and which: have a church (or a mosque or a synagogue) inside, make the Bible (or the Corano) available to their guests in the room, organize religious activities, and have religious personnel capable of providing adequate information.

(Hoffmann, 1994; Fleischer and Nitzav, 1995; Mansfeld et al., 1995; Weidenfeld, 2006)

**Pilgrim Lifestyle** → “It is a way of using travel to get to know, enrich yourself spiritually and culturally, and get in touch with nature and other people” (Atuire, 2012, p. 180).

A search for sobriety and authenticity that translates into the choice of simple, but functional, and clean accommodation, where there is attention to good food and to the care of places and traditions.

## Accommodation offering (I)

### Origins:

- The tradition of hosting travellers at religious houses has been on-going since early biblical times (Book of Genesis, 18:1-15; Gospel according to St. Matthew, Mt 25:34-40).
- Later, St. Benedict included hospitality in chapter 53 of his Rule (De Hospitibus Suscipiendis) as an important aspect of monastic life: each monastery should have a space specifically devoted to host guests.
- Since the Middle Ages, free ecclesiastical hospitality has allowed crowds to visit the great Christianity destinations. Indeed, the success of a pilgrim route was largely dependent on the presence on the way – especially in the most arduous places – of these religious houses. All those who travelled long roads to reach Rome were hosted at religious houses as a sign of Christian charity.

## Accommodation offering (II)

### Current trends:

- Traditional hotels do not modify the contents of their services to meet the specific needs of pilgrims and religious tourists, with negative effects on their level of satisfaction.
- Religious accommodation are created with the specific aim of responding to the needs of pilgrims and religious tourists (e.g., Sharia-compliant hotels).
- The steep decline in Catholic religious vocations, which has led to the presence of underused or vacant (when not deteriorating) religious houses, some of which were founded by saints, frequently located in buildings of historic and cultural value. These empty or underutilized convents and monasteries are renovated and reorganized to welcome pilgrims and religious tourists.
- The Italian government funds (approximately 1.7 billion euros) received by Rome, along with the Lazio region, to facilitate the mobility and accommodations needs of 30 million pilgrims expected for the Great Jubilee celebrations of 2000.

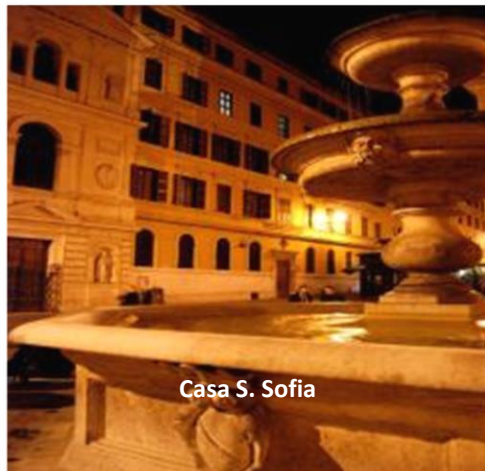
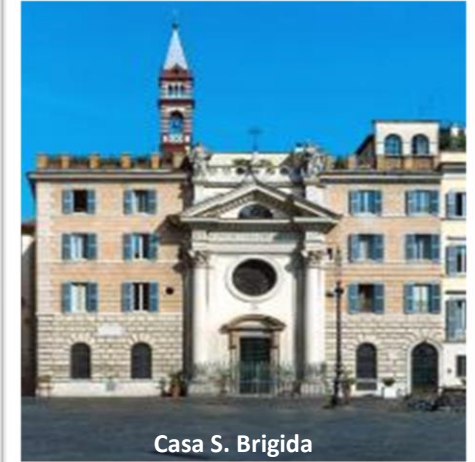
## Accommodation offering (III)

### Academic literature on the phenomenon

- Non-academic contributions on the phenomenon show that increasingly, in Italy and in the world, underutilized or empty religious houses are being renovated and transformed into accommodation facilities (e.g. CNN, 2012; The New York Times, 2008).
- Academic contributions are scarce and highlight the need to deepen the phenomenon especially with reference to the ability of these structures to contribute to the sustainable development of places.



## Accommodation offering (IV)



## Renewal and launch of religious accommodations in Rome (I)

The birth of the current model of religious accommodation in Rome was favoured by the combination of three key factors:

1. the presence of religious houses that are not fully used or empty;
2. the opportunity to meet new needs in terms of accommodation (e.g., the 30 million pilgrims expected in Rome for the Great Jubilee of 2000);
3. the possibility of benefiting from public funds (approximately 1.7 billion Euros) received by the city of Rome and the Lazio Region to meet the reception and mobility needs of Jubilee pilgrims.

## Renewal and launch of religious accommodations in Rome (II)

Religious houses have been converted into accommodation structures respecting their origins:

- The spaces dedicated to religious (if still present) have been kept separate from those for guests;
- Each structure has a church inside where religious services are celebrated daily;
- The rooms have remained the original size: they are small, Spartan furnished, and sometimes with services shared with other rooms.
- All guests are required to respect a specific rules of conduct (which include a dress code).

## Renewal and launch of religious accommodations in Rome (III)

In addition to the accommodation services, guests benefit from:

- A deeply spiritual contest
- Social and cultural initiatives
- The price level is, on average, 20% -30% lower respect to similar structures
- The year-end incomes are used in solidarity projects



# Development of religious accommodations in Rome (I)

Religious accommodations host believers and non-believers. It is estimated that they:

- Contribute to 4% of the overall non-hotel accommodation offer in the city
- Offer 17% of the beds of non-hotel facilities
- Accommodate about 1 million tourists who stay for an average of 3.1 nights

These structures are particularly appreciated for the following reasons:

- They are experiential contexts
- They are located in central areas of the city
- They are excellent value for money

They do not operate in isolation, but interact with tourists and local communities, in accordance with sustainability requirements.

These accommodations:

- Benefit from the Christian traditions of the place where they are rooted
- Transfer their culture and knowledge to the place where they are rooted
- Offer authentic contexts of hospitality
- Are environmentally sustainable (nothing new is built)
- Generate a positive impact on the territory thanks to the recovery of underused or empty buildings

## Development of religious accommodations in Rome (II)

Main problems:

- Replacement of religious entrepreneurs
- Maintenance costs of the structures
- Conflicts with other accommodation facilities due to tax benefits granted for their religious nature
- Need to keep up with changes (especially technological ones)
- Lack of a systemic approach between the different structures (i.e., no integration)

## Conclusions

It is possible to define religious accommodations as:

*a new sustainability-oriented hospitality model aimed at satisfying the needs of individuals, families, and groups of any or no religious affiliation. This new model is characterized by original structures as contexts of experiential authenticity, rooted in territories rich in religious, cultural and historic traditions*

The relationship between religious accommodations and territories can be characterized by contradictions and discontinuities which, in order to be overcome, require an effort of cooperation by all involved stakeholders (public, private, and religious).

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**Thanks for your attention!**

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