

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH FOR APPLYING THE TOURISM MARKETING MIX TO SPIRITUAL TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper discusses the growing importance of spiritual tourism in particular as a separate niche market segment in the world economy. This paper presents the view that considerable potential exists for spiritual tourism product if marketed effectively. The paper proposes the application of the public and private partnership approach (PPP) from economic theory to design effective marketing strategies for spiritual tourism. In this paper, the PPP framework is presented as to effectively apply the tourism marketing mix for marketing spiritual tourism. Further, all elements of the tourism marketing mix are separately analysed and their application for spiritual tourism is discussed, which critically suggests their usefulness to create and apply a new PPP framework-model for marketing strategy for spiritual tourism. The important role of PPP as a critical element of the marketing mix for spiritual tourism is an outstanding contribution of this research paper. This study suggests that PPP will enhance the competitive advantage of the spiritual tourism product through collaboration, and partnerships between the various stake holders. The research offers a unique combination of economics and marketing theories to illustrate the significance, growth and economic sustainability of spiritual tourism in the 21st century and beyond.

Keywords: *Spiritual Tourism, Marketing Mix, Strategy, Public and Private Partnerships*

INTRODUCTION

The significance of tourism in the world economy has grown stronger over the years and people are still indulging in various types of tourism even during the current global economic recession (Rosentraub & Joo 2009; Smith 2009; Vu & Turner 2009; Cohen 2008). Tourism expenditure is also growing and contributing to monetary circulation in the world economy. Tourism expenditure was observed to be US\$533 billion in 2003 and it has been increasing by 4% annually since 1995 (Fleischer & Rivlin 2009; Kulendran & Dwyer 2009). Tourism has consistently been ranked as one of the fastest growing industries in the world and the largest industry in terms of employment (Vu & Turner 2009). Despite the 2008 slowdown in tourism growth, global tourist arrivals grew by 2% and reached 924 million, an increase of 16 million over 2007 (WTO 2009).

Tourism has become one of the world's largest service sector industries with enormous potential for further growth; however, it is sensitive to external factors, like terrorism, natural disasters and infectious diseases which can cripple the local economy at destinations in the poor developing countries. Therefore it is important to have a diverse basket of tourism destinations and types such as recreational, historical, cultural and spiritual –religious, supporting the tourism industry in general. Religious tourism according to Timothy and Olsen, (2006) is one of the ancient forms of non economic travel. According to World Tourism Organisation WTO (2004), 689 million people travelled to foreign countries in 2000, out of which nearly 40 million people travelled for spiritual purposes from Christian, Muslim and Hindu families and there is a growing trend in the spiritual tourism market segment (mosques, churches, synagogues, temples, cultural and historical sites linked with spirituality) along with cultural and heritage tourism, spending US \$ 478 billion. Factors such as globalisation, education, high disposable income, industrialisation, opening up of foreign markets, better advertising and strategic marketing policies and techniques have contributed to the growth of tourism as an important service sector for the economy.

Throughout history, oral, archaeological and written records document peoples' involvement with spiritual experiences and their journeys to engage in spiritual activities (Blomfield 2009; Timothy & Olsen 2006; Sharpley & Sundaram 2005; Rountree 2002; Shackley 2002; Rinschede 1992; Burton 1855). The term 'spiritual tourism' is largely unheard 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 Cup, for example. Currently there are no industry recognised standard marketing strategies that could be applied to this growing spiritual tourism product. The research study in this paper suggests that the tourism marketing mix could be applied by adopting the PPP framework derived from economic theory as an important business framework for effective marketing of spiritual tourism (Montanheiro, Kuznik & Ochojski 2003).

This paper is structured as follows. The first section of the paper provides a background introduction to the growing importance of the spiritual tourism industry in general as a separate niche market segment in the world economy. Section two puts forward a literature review specific to the spiritual tourism, tourism marketing mix strategies and the public and private partnership theory. Section three explores the tourism marketing mix proposed by Morrison (2002) based on product, price, place, partnership, promotion, people, packaging and programming and analyses its application for spiritual tourism. Section four applies the public and private partnership approach as an important business framework for effective marketing of spiritual tourism with examples. Section five provides some conclusions and directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

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 (Cochrane 2009 ; Simpson, Cloud, Newman & Fuqua 2008; Pesut 2003; Delbecq 2000; Konz & Ryan 1999). The mounting interest in spirituality has influenced a number of industries around the world (Brownstein 2008; Fernando & Jackson 2006; Heintzman 2003; Mitroff & Denton 1999). The tourism industry is one of the industries which have been affected by this growing interest in spirituality (Andriotis 2009; Cochrane 2009; Finney, Orwig & Spake 2009; Geary 2008; Tilson 2005; Cohen 1972). Spiritual tourism is growing and is an important segment of a massive tourism industry catering to needs of spiritual tourists in particular and facing competition as well as problems of survivability with other segments of the tourism industry. Spiritual tourism is a new concept but it is certainly not a new phenomenon. Based on the review of the literature, the interviews with spiritual tourists in Australia, Pakistan and the UK, this research defined 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 a Divine context, regardless of the main reason for travelling' (Haq & Jackson 2009, p. 145). Therefore, this study considers spiritual tourism as a type of travel taken by people from any religious background, with the goal of achieving spiritual development by realising a better connection with God, the High Spirit or the Supreme Being.

Marketing Mix Strategies for Spiritual Tourism

The marketing mix based on 4Ps has been reviewed and analysed repeatedly over the years by various marketing scholars (Constantinides 2006; Moller 2006; Hakansson & Waluszewski 2005; Rafiq & Ahmed 1995; Gronroos 1989, 1997). Booms & Bitner (1981) who acknowledged the gap left in the marketing mix for services, they added 3 more Ps for services marketing that included process, physical evidence and participants. In marketing tourism products and services, Morrison (2002) is recognized as the authority to derive the 8Ps of the marketing mix, the application of this marketing mix to spiritual tourism will be discussed in this paper.

Gronroos (1997) has criticised the adoption of the marketing mix in marketing strategy theory and suggested the paradigm shift towards relationship marketing. In his study he completely relied on relationship marketing as the only solution and failed to realise the virtues of the marketing mix. Moreover, relationship marketing has been criticised for being too conceptual and failing to provide any testable theory (Palmer & Wilson 2009). The social marketing concept has also been observed to be missing in the marketing mix (Dann 2009). However, Rafiq and Ahmed (1995) and Borden (1964) illustrated the usefulness of the marketing mix as a generic marketing strategy. Constantinides (2006) also analysed the potential application of the marketing mix and its value to real world marketing. Various authors have analysed the potential application of the marketing mix and its value to real world marketing (Constantinides 2006; Moller 2006; Rafiq & Ahmed 1995). There is a significant gap in the literature on tourism marketing strategy as little research has been conducted on the marketing strategy applicable to tourism products and this area warrants considerable attention (Das & DiRienzo 2009; Hassan & Craft 2005; Riege & Perry 2000; March 1994; Chon & Olsen 1990).

A number of public and private tourism organisations have been aggressively marketing tourism products and services at national and international levels. Thus, marketing tourism products is of great interest to a range of stakeholders involved with the business of tourism (Tribe 2008). However, it should be noted that regardless of the potential, there is a lack of empirical research into tourism marketing (Li & Petrick 2008; Buhalis 2000; Riege & Perry 2000; Chon & Olson 1990). The research on tourism marketing has been limited by being conducted within specific settings or about specific products and this applied research has prevented generic concepts being derived from the research. Spiritual tourists are special interest tourists undertaking travel to achieve specific objectives and they have very specific needs. It has been suggested that since services inherently have an intangible nature and they have intensive customer interaction, customer orientation plays a critical role in terms of commercial success for service organisations (Dann 2009; Wagner, Hennig-Thurau & Rudolph 2009; Daniel & Darby 1997).

Public and Private Partnership

From a traditional Keynesian policy approach of totally publicly funded projects, to a Monetarist approach of totally privately funded projects, along with Porter's idea which is based on the premise that each group will look after itself almost in competition on the notion of being strategically desirable cannot be totally suitable today. PPP is justified on the basis that the gains from bringing together the key players improves quality and availability of goods and services without requiring additional tax to fund new projects.

Various forms of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) instrument are now widely used to deliver infrastructure and other public good type services (Montanheiro, Kuznik & Ochojski 2003, Medhekar 2003 and 2005; Barczyk & Montanheiro 2001). It accounts for a very diverse range of cooperative or collaborative efforts that, "implies a commonality among them which does not exist" (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002). The term PPP has at least six distinctive meanings. PPP as management reform, problem conversion, moral regeneration, risk shifting, restructuring the public service and as power sharing (Linder 2000). The Ministry of Public Affairs in British Columbia (1999) defines PPP in the following terms:

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are arrangements between government and private sector entities for the purpose of providing public infrastructure, community facilities and related services. Such partnerships are characterised by the sharing of investment, risk, responsibility and reward between the partners. (cited in Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002, p.170).

Public-Private Partnership defines cooperation between the public sector or government and the private sector, non profit organisations and international groups and institutions. Partnerships are essential for planning and implementing federal, state and local government tourism related infrastructure initiatives necessary for supporting sustainable tourism development. Initially, it was the government sector that played a major role in infrastructure provision in general. Since the privatisation initiatives begun in the 1980s by the Reagan and Thatcher governments, which were then adopted widely, the public sector was keen to shift the provision of health, education, telecommunications and transport services etc, to the private sector and non-profit organisations to keep expenditure under control and reduce debt. Now after the mass privatisations of the 1980s and 1990s, there is a move towards partnerships between the private and public sectors on a large scale in the UK, European Union, Canada, Australia and more recently in many developing countries. Provision of Infrastructure has been opened up to competition in many countries developed and developing, encouraging the private sector participation due to high deficit in the public sector to finance all infrastructure facilities. Thus high congestion cost, budgetary and fiscal deficits, inadequate provision, poor quality and maintenance of transport infrastructure facilities can be avoided by encouraging Public Private Partnership (PPP) or Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) similarly adopted by other developed countries (Montanheiro, et al. 2003; Mbone-Enie 2003, Markell 2009).

The public sector was also criticised for inefficiency, bureaucratic delays and red tape, high costs and budget deficits. It was a general belief that government had failed in the provision of public goods and services and that the private sector would provide similar goods of better quality at a lower cost. This led to privatisation initiatives around the world in major developed countries. But in many cases, privatisation without proper regulation and corporate governance resulted in private sector failure and the collapse of many large firms. Given these failures, a new form of governance PPP of a cooperative nature is often necessary for the provision of public goods and services including spiritual tourism destination related infrastructure to achieve common goals and objectives of sustainable growth of this market segment. Sustainable partnership in spiritual tourism involves sharing of responsibilities, planning, developing objectives, product innovation, promotion, packaging, and marketing, undertaking financial risks, accountability and implementing programs.

DISCUSSION

Application of the Marketing 8Ps, to Spiritual Tourism

To ensure that there was a first-order fit between the proposed marketing strategies and the marketing activities selected to implement each strategy, the discussion of spiritual tourism marketing strategies for specific groups in this paper adopted the tourism marketing mix classified by Morrison (2002). It has been suggested that despite its simplicity and applicability, the marketing mix requires modification but it has not been suggested how this modification should take place or how it would improve the existing concept (Constantinides 2006; Moller 2006; Hakansson & Waluszewski 2005). The elements of the tourism marketing mix and their application for spiritual tourism is discussed below.

The product consists of what is being offered to the spiritual tourists and its features and benefits (Yuan, Cai, Morrison & Linton 2005; Lee, Morrison, Lheto, Webb & Reid 2005; Feng, Morrison & Ismail 2003). Although the spiritual tourism product has long

been in existence, with the recent increase in interest in spirituality it seems likely that spiritual tourism is on the move towards the growth phase (Piedmont & Leach 2002). Adopting the perspective of McKecher (2002), spiritual tourism could be viewed as a broad concept that involves tangible and intangible products. The tangible items include churches, mosques, temples, shrines and other centres with a spiritual focus. The intangible products and services include organized spiritual events, seminars, festivals and gatherings with spiritual motives. Moreover, the spiritual tourism product consists of uni-religious, multi-religious and non-religious brands linked to the attitudes and understanding of the spiritual tourists. These products offer different value to different spiritual tourists, for example, religious fulfilment, understanding various spiritual traditions, religious or non-religious spiritual growth in a sense of knowing better or getting closer to God, the High Spirit or the Supreme Being. Product differentiation plays an important role in a competitive advantage strategy although differentiation by itself is not sufficient to engineer a competitive advantage (Tollin & Jones 2009). Spiritual tourism being part of the broader industry of tourism, it has to be differentiated from other tourism products. Spending money on product innovation, development, improvement, promotion and distribution to achieve a dominant position in the market is a critical strategy for spiritual tourism (Read, Dew, Sarasvathy, Song & Wiltbank 2009).

People play an important role in a marketing strategy for a service product (Dev, Zhou, Brown, & Agarwal 2009, Lee et al. 2005). In spiritual tourism many people interact with the tourists at various places during the experience. These people range from the travel agents to the destination guides who have the opportunity to transform transaction to relationships (Palmer & Wilson 2009). These people need to be selected and trained so that they meet tourists' expectations. The spiritual destination guides should be well trained, educated and informed about the religious traditions, history and culture connected to the place and the visitors. The training programs should also focus on English or any other relevant language skills. Well trained people during the spiritual tourism process will be able to build good communication channels to facilitate the delivery of messages between service providers and buyers of spiritual tourism products (Farrell & Oczkowski 2009; Hunt, Arnett & Madhavaram 2006; Lindgreen 2001; Gronroos 1997). An effective interaction of the people with the spiritual tourists will lead to strong relationship marketing that will result in long term marketing of spiritual tourism of the particular destination (Li & Petrick 2008; Moliner, Sánchez, Rodriguex & Callarisa 2007).

Packaging and programming has become an established element of the marketing mix for services (Alzua et al. 1998; Morrison, Hsieh & O'Leary 1994). Packaging combines all types of relevant services presented as a single-price offering (Moliner et al. 2007; Nishimura, King & Waryszak 2007; Morrison 2002). Programming presents the design and delivery of special activities, events, or programs to motivate customers to spend more and provide more value in a package (Mowlana, & Smith 1993; Morrison 2002). The spiritual tourism programs should offer spiritual education and knowledge about various traditions leading to global spiritual unity and growth by seeking God, the High Spirit or the Supreme Being. Packaging for spiritual tourists should be designed for two issues, the religious and non-religious segments and the individual and group segments. The group segments need to be further divided into familiar groups such as family or friends, and the unfamiliar groups where strangers meet and travel together for spiritual growth.

Place refers to the distribution of spiritual tourism products and services to spiritual tourists (Yuan, Cai, Morrison, & Linton 2005; Feng, Morrison & Ismail 2003). Several authors in tourism marketing agree that the distribution of any type of tourism product is critical for the success of marketing the product (Huang, Chen & Wu 2009; Pearce, Reid & Schott 2009; Smith 2007; Pearce & Schott 2005). A recent study revealed that tourism distribution intermediaries generally consist of third party websites, control reservation offices, global distribution systems, travel agents, wholesalers, switch companies, direct sellers and inbound operators (Pearce, Tan & Schott 2007). The tourism literature suggests that the distribution system is becoming more and more complex due to the evolution of many new intermediaries (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2008; Pearce & Schott 2005). The rise of the internet as a distribution channel has been accepted, though it is still more appreciated as an information channel (Huang et al. 2009). These latest trends have created two major practices in tourism distribution, intermediation and disintermediation. Intermediation stresses on the expansion of distribution channels, while disintermediation emphasises upon the contraction of distribution channels (Clrides, Nearchou & Pashardes 2008). In spiritual tourism, the operators need to carefully select only one option depending upon the destination. For example, for spiritual tourism to Mecca or the Vatican, intermediation should be used. While, for spiritual tourism to the shrine of a specific Catholic Saint or a Shiite Muslim, disintermediation would be preferred.

Promotion of tourism products involves communication between tourists, tourism operators and other stakeholders (Feng, Morrison & Ismail 2003; Yuan, Cai, Morrison & Linton 2005). Effective communication develops product awareness and persuades tourists to purchase specific products (Scott 2008; Iyer, Soberman & Villas-Boas 2005; Buhalis 2000; Mahajan & Muller 1999). Advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, merchandising, public relations and publicity are tools of promotion and should be selected thoughtfully by the tourism operators. Various types of promotional techniques; above the line (television, radio, the internet and print media) and below the line (participation in tourism fairs, festivals and conferences)

could be used for marketing tourism (Buhalis 2000). The adoption of both above and below the line promotional techniques has been suggested for reaching particular spiritual tourism market segments. Above the line techniques would include participation in travel programs on television, advertisements in religious and spiritual magazines and on relevant websites. Below the line techniques would involve participation in multi-faith/religious/cultural festivals and seminars to attract the spiritual tourism coming from different back grounds.

Pricing is critical as it underpins the profit element in a marketing strategy (Sousa & Bradley 2009; Cassidy & Guilding 2007; Jiang 2007; Lee et al. 2005; Pellinen 2003; Morrison, Hsieh & O'Leary 1994). The literature suggests that, in general, pilgrims or religious tourists are not price conscious (Timothy & Olsen 2006; Sharpley & Sundaram 2005; Shackley 2002; Eade 1992; Rinschede 1992). Many authors have proposed various types of pricing techniques that could be applied for tourism products but it has been recognised as a complex process (Sousa & Bradley 2009; Cassidy & Guilding 2007; Pellinen 2003; Buhalis 2000). This paper recommends using the price bundling strategy in order to cater for all spiritual tourists visiting for various reasons. It is further suggested to select from the two options of discriminatory pricing techniques to attract the regular spiritual tourists, and target pricing to attract the specific tourist segments interested in spirituality and related affairs (Sousa & Bradley 2009; Cassidy & Guilding 2007; Buhalis 2000).

Partnership brings about operating efficiencies among various stakeholders involved in the spiritual tourism industry; the partnership strategy must benefit all partners (Tilson 2005; Feng, Morrison & Ismail 2003; Augustyn & Knowles 2000; Alzua, O'Leary & Morrison 1998; Selin & Chavez 1995). A means of ensuring that all the significant partnership elements have been incorporated in the partnership strategy is to work through the five stage partnership model checklist (Selin & Chavez 1995). The first stage requires the development of a shared common vision, an examination of existing networks, determining leadership and setting incentives. The second stage advocates problem setting based upon recognition of interdependence and common problems. The third, direction setting stage consists of setting ground rules for goal achievement, searching for information on options and organising of sub-groups. The fourth stage of partnership structure establishes the relationship between the partners, linking them specifically to a monitoring system. The outcome stage delineates the programs, results and rewards desired from the partnership strategy. While presenting partnerships as part of marketing strategies for spiritual tourism, the public and private partnerships between the tourism operators, government agencies, destination manager's local community and religious organisations are very significant and their applications are discussed in the next section. The important role of PPP as a critical element of the marketing mix for spiritual tourism is an outstanding contribution of this research paper.

PPP Approach as a Strategy for Marketing of Spiritual Tourism

The application of public and private partnership approach for tourism in general (McKercher 2002; Tilson 2005; Markell 2009; APEC 2002; Montanheiro, et al. 2003; WTO 2009; GOI 2008) and spiritual tourism in particular, is critical for planning, product and destination development, infrastructure provision, pricing, determining demand, promotion, packaging and programming. The growing demand for tourism and need for spirituality at a time of war, economic instability, natural disasters and global financial crisis, which is healing to the human soul as well as the increasingly high cost of provision of meeting infrastructure needs by the public sector, requires PPP strategy for marketing and long term sustainability of spiritual tourism. Public and private sector partnership application to the tourism industry in general is very recent since 2002, mainly due to the competitive nature of the tourism industry, as it is assumed that it may escalate the cost (OECD 1997 & 2006). Moreover, the application of PPP to spiritual tourism marketing is a unique aspect of this research study. Proper application of PPP brings the stakeholder resources together in terms of expert knowledge, capital and innovative ideas. The tourism industry benefits from PPP particularly in terms of coordination, organising, planning, management, quality delivery of the product and problem solving by identifying common goals, problems, partnership programs to achieve these goals and evaluation of partnership programs, outcomes and incentives. This study suggests that PPP enhances the competitive advantage of the spiritual tourism product through collaboration, and partnerships between the various stake holders: public(government and its departments and Government Business Enterprises) , private, local community, business organisations and international bodies such as (World Tourism Organisation (WTO), World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) , Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) , Asia Pacific Tourism Association (PATA) NGO and industry (UNESCAP 2004; Bramwell and Lane, 2000).

Spiritual tourist destinations such as Mecca, Vatican in Rome, Lady of Fatima in Portugal, Jerusalem and other religious places around the world, require private finance initiatives (PFI) and public and private partnerships (PPP) (Augustyn & Knowles 2000). These will support the provision of tourist infrastructure to underpin the economy's growth, international competitiveness, environmental and sustainable development of spiritual tourism destinations as a niche market. According to Tilson (2005), a partnership approach that is church-state collaboration where the community organisations, companies, government representatives, government organisations, come together to form a collective and consensual approach to

investment into the community's future is essential for the success of spiritual destinations. The main function of the public sector is to provide key infrastructure and supporting services, innovation, training, education, employment and destination management, pricing, promotion and marketing of the (Elliott 1997; Mbone-Enie 2003) spiritual tourist destination for its long-term sustainability and economic viability.

Support from the private sector in the development and management of, and provision of essential spiritual tourism products such as hotel accommodation, travel-airlines, tours, retail shops meals and handicrafts, restaurant, safety and security etc to the spiritual tourist is critical. For example, South Asia foot-step of Lord Buddha circuit integrated with eco-tourism has been identified by the ADB (2008) report; which will appeal to spiritual tourist and Buddhist pilgrimage, representing 376 million Buddhists, which is approximately 6% of world population. The governments of South Asian countries along with the private sector are working in partnership in developing and promoting this new product. This paper also suggests that spiritual tourism is going to treble in the next 20 years and PPP and PFI for infrastructure investment is necessary. Wide range of stake holders (see Table-1) from the demand side and from the supply side can be categorised (APEC 2002, p.2) to provide investment in infrastructure, through the development of budget hotels as well as other tourist facilities and amenities required for spiritual tourist.

Table -1: Stakeholders in the tourism industry

Supply Side (SS)	Category	Examples
	Resource owners	Traditional landholders
	Resource managers	National park managers
	Providers of infrastructure	Construction, design, power, gas, water, waste treatment, roads
	Planners & development control	Local govt authorities
	Deliverers of product	Enterprise operators-hotels, airlines, hire cars, attractions, tour operators, travel agents, farm stays, convention centres, restaurants, museums, sporting (world cups) and religious events e.g. Hajj, youth catholic congress
	Destination developers and marketers	Tourism commissions; local government
	Employees	Managers, hospitality, planning , communication, ICT, Finance, construction
Demand Side	Tourist	Domestic and international- e.g. package holidays, eco-tourist, business travellers, backpackers visiting friends and relatives, conferences, cultural, spiritual and medical tourists.

Source: Adapted from (APEC, 2002, p. 2)

Long term sustainability of any tourism project and particularly spiritual tourism cannot be achieved without PPP between the various stake holders. Zamani-Farahani & Henderson (2009) in their paper discuss the effects of Iran and Saudi Arabia's state religion-Islam on tourism development, policies, management, marketing where PPP is essential for its success along with community involvement in Muslim countries. In 2008, nearly 1.73 million foreign pilgrims performed Haj along with approximately 750,000 Saudi pilgrims. Increase in demand for religious tourism from world's 1.8 billion Muslims continues to drive Saudi Arabia real estate growth in Jeddah for Pilgrims visiting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina to perform Umrah and Haj are expected to reach 8 million by 2010 according to Saudi Government. Given the high, risk free and guaranteed return on investment according to a study carried out by Proleads research house for Cityscape Saudi Arabia, throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, there are 812 active projects in real estate, leisure and entertainment and infrastructure sectors with a total budget of \$543 billion, supporting spiritual tourism market.

Saudi Arabia's real estate sector now contributes an estimated 5.1%, or SAR 55 billion, to the kingdom's GDP, with forecasts for further growth of 5.8% by the end of this year. Land that surrounds the holy sites is being developed and the property market is now attracting residential, commercial infrastructure and real estate such as roads, railways, ports, hospitals clinics retail etc given that in 2008, 1.5 million pilgrims arrived by air, 131,000 by land, and nearly 23,000 by sea. Therefore PPP has promising opportunities for developing spiritual tourism related infrastructure (Cityscape 2009). Across the Mena region there is an increasing realisation that spiritual tourist infrastructure needs cannot be met by the public sector alone and (PFI) in infrastructure as well as PPP is necessary. Most countries' preferred model of private involvement goes beyond mere subcontracting, but stops short of full privatisation. PPP strategy with the public and private partners sharing project risks and, in many cases, asset ownership, is increasingly applied. This process should be strengthened by ongoing reforms in public

sector transparency, sound fiscal practices, regulatory reform and a commitment to open markets for the success of PPP – PFI in the countries participating in the MENA-OECD Initiative (OECD 2006).

In case of India, there are many examples of successful PPP for spiritual tourism initiatives. From the Himalayan spiritual destinations of Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples such as Vaishnu-Dewi in Kashmir to the temples, mosques, sikh temples and colonial churches in India, is seen as having great potential for the growth and development of spiritual tourism destinations by the government at the state and central level for employment generation and earning foreign exchange revenue. World Tourism Organisation (WTO) prepared a holistic infrastructure plan for PPP, with the Government of India, State Government of Uttarakhand, Tourism Board of Uttarakhand to promote eco tourism, adventure tourism, and spiritual tourism, "... as three mantras to be followed up by the state", so that adventure, nature and spiritual experience all can be enjoyed by the Indian and international tourist (Sagar 2007; GOI 2008). Further, states of Kerala, Rajasthan and Goa, have also capitalised on marketing eco-tourism, medical and spiritual tourism and recognised the benefits PPP can bring to the state through mutually beneficial partnerships (Varkey 2006; Chandran 2007; GOI 2008). The state Government of Rajasthan is also actively involved in organizing new festivals to promote Rajasthan as a 'Year Round Tourism Destination', by implementing the PPP model in key tourism projects in the state, offering historical monuments and temples for adoption to private sector etc (GOI 2008; GOR 2009). Similarly in the State of Uttar Pradesh places like Varanasi-Sarnath, Bodhgaya, Rajgir and the Ganga triangle is developed to be promoted on a PPP model for spiritual tourism besides yoga, spiritual and meditation programs which form part of spiritual experience to present India as a symbol of religious destinations with a spiritual trail (Varkey 2006; GOI 2008).

State Government of Jharkhand has given priority to the development, promotion and marketing of its eco, spiritual and tourism segments through PPP, to put it on the global tourist destination map by 2010. On average 1.25 million domestic tourists from the states of West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh visit Jharkhand, of which one million are spiritual tourists visiting the temples of Deoghar or Baidyanath Dham. The state government along with the private sector is constructing category budget accommodation, as well as improving and investing in road-rail infrastructure network, electricity and tele-communication to the state capital under the PPP model. To attract foreign tourists into Jharkhand region, the state government along with the private sector has not only embarked on an aggressive marketing and tourism promotion exercise including participation at major travel and tourism conferences such as World Tourism Market London in 2008 and ITB Berlin event in 2009 but also identified the famous Ranchi-Netarhat-Betta circuit for developing an inter-religious circuit in Parasnath temple situated at 4430 ft above sea level about 190 Km from its capital Ranchi, the most sacred place for the believers of Jain religion and attracts Jain tourists throughout the year (Chavan 2008).

The PPP approach to 8 P's of marketing mix should be applied and integrated in such a way that the objective of developing, promoting and marketing spiritual tourist destinations is achieved in a sustainable manner. To innovate and develop new product (spiritual tourism and the goods and services that complement spiritual tourism) it is important to adopt a marketing strategy by involving all public and private stake holders (see Table-2). Market research along with PPP should identify the key customers, people who are going to generate demand for the spiritual-religious tourist product locally and internationally as well as the suppliers of the various spiritual tourist products. PPP is necessary to get local people as well to open their religious places of worship of historical importance to the tourist from all over the world to capitalise on their spiritual significance. Further educational institutions also play a key role in providing information to travel agents, tour guides and operators about the spiritual destination, its geography, history and culture along with the religious organisations and scholars.

Table-2: Applying PPP to 8Ps of Marketing

8 Ps of Morrison: Tourism marketing mix	Examples of 8 ps	Applying Public & Private Partnership Approach
Product	Tangible and intangibles, Development of product Spiritual destinations, Church, Mosques, souvenirs (pictures, religious beads statues), multi faith/ religious/cultural annual festivals, events, fairs and conventions.	PPP is essential (collaboration, coordinated marketing, cooperation & consensus) to develop product, innovate, restore, preserve and market, cultural, historical and spiritual monuments and destinations for tourism. Investment in Infrastructure, human and capital (tangible and intangible). Improve and enhance product quality.
Price	Entry ticket, air-road travel cost, accommodation, Price Discrimination, cost-plus pricing, average cost &, marginal cost pricing, competitive pricing, bundling pricing.	PPP for determining the price for domestic and international tourists, discriminatory pricing for spiritual tourists and target pricing for specific tourist groups & related affairs. Government and the private tourism product operators and providers to have consensus on pricing – price discrimination for different groups (so every one can visit)
Place	Distribution of products and services, third party websites, control reservation office, global distribution systems, travel agents, wholesale and retailers, switch companies, direct sellers and inbound-outbound tourism operators of spiritual tourist destinations.	Selection of disintermediation or intermediation for distribution of spiritual tourism product. PPP to develop infrastructure facilities (physical, building transport, roads as well as website, brochures etc) needed to support the Spiritual tourism business at the point of destination as well as at the source of tourist to provide necessary travel services for planning the trip.
People	Local, national and international tourists. Spiritual tourism operators involved in spiritual tourism processes; travel agents, religious leaders, family and peer groups & tour guides at the source as well as destination.	Govt to provide infrastructure investment such as road, rail airways (easy access) for the private sector providers of accommodation restaurants, retail business to function well. Training of the tourism operators, guides etc-HRM
Promotion	Advertising religious destinations, places of worship, annual religious festivals and conventions, conferences, promotion objectives, message, media and budget. Usages of TV, radio programs, relevant magazines, travel news and internet websites.	PPP required at all levels by participating in trades conventions and world tourism fairs and conferences. Marketing strategy off and on-line involving all stake holders involved in spiritual tourism business. Coordinated marketing by web-sites, posters, print, TV& radio-above the line and fair, festivals & conferences below the line.
Packaging	Packaging spiritual destinations along with air fare, overnight in transit stop over visits to spiritual places, accommodation, business travel and conferences, adopting product differentiation (religious and combined with non-religious segments, price discrimination (individual, pensioners, adults, children, families, strangers and groups on a spiritual journey).	PPP for packaging and branding spiritual tourist destinations and tours for example to Mecca, Kerala as destination for medical and spiritual Tourism, Rajasthan as 'year around tourism destination', state of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh have been developed and marketed as spiritual tourist triangles, 'Banding Greece', through PPP measures.
Programing	Information about spiritual programs to attract people to specific destinations and events to understand global spirituality, for global peace and spiritual culture and traditions. Preparing special travel itinerary by travel agents (brochures) similar to other types for skiing, cruising etc available in detail. Program for Hajj, Hindu religious festival in India, carnivals of various catholic saints, world religious conventions etc.	Education and training in spiritual tourism education, religious studies, history and culture for the tourism operators, web site designers and tour guides.
Partnership	Government departments & agencies (tourism, religious affairs, cultural heritage, travel and communication, infrastructure rail-road, airways) Private sector (businesses, wholesale and retailers of tourism service providers, religious organisations, destination managers. Partnership essential for identifying common goals, problems, partnership programs to achieve these goals and evaluation of partnership programs, outcomes and incentives.	Enabling partnership with private sector, NGO's and international organisations. PPP between Governments at all levels, Government departments, Government business enterprises, WTO, private sector businesses, NGO, local business communities, local population, police, defence force, Religious organisations and institutions, community organisations, educational institutions, travel agents, key religious leaders, private business philanthropy and support for planning, development, implementation, pricing, maintaining, preserving and marketing cultural heritage and spiritual destinations to the world.

Source: (Designed for this paper)

Price determines the value and quality of the spiritual tourist destination that the consumers are willing to pay compared to other substitute type of tourist activities available. People may be willing to pay \$5000 or more for a specialist tour to holy place of Jerusalem, Mecca, Lady of Fatima or Vatican, because the perceived value, benefit and spiritual experience gained will be more than the cost of the tour to the spiritual tourist. PPP is essential to determine the price in case of spiritual destinations-

place, so that all people (low or high income) have ability to pay to consume these spiritual tourist products and have tangible and intangible spiritual experience. Thus resorting to price discrimination in case of spiritual tourism is essential as it will provide access to all income groups based on their ability to pay, otherwise people belonging to low income groups can be excluded from such spiritual experience. Generally, a unique destination does command a high value; however, in case of spiritual destinations, in spite of being unique, like a visit to Mecca, or Vatican, PPP is essential to set different prices so that people from different groups (age, income) can have spiritual experience and are motivated to visit. PPP can be used as a distribution channel (direct to the tourist-consumers and indirectly through intermediaries like tourism service and providers and operators and travel agents, online advertising for package tours etc) to market the spiritual destination in the local, domestic and international market to the spiritual-religious oriented tourist. **Promotion, packaging and programming** the spiritual tourism segment as a new product by itself and bundling with either cultural, heritage, historical or eco-tourism destinations to the niche market, requires public and private partnership at all levels to get the spiritual message across to all potential spiritual oriented consumers as well as tour operators nationally and internationally. The aim is to target these consumers and inform and educate them about the spiritual tourism destinations and tours, complementary goods (product and services available) price etc so that they finally make their spiritual journey.

CONCLUSION

Spiritual tourism is a fast growing global phenomenon. The tourism market has been observed to be growing world wide and it's the fifth largest in case of Australia after iron-ore, coal, education and gold (ABS 2007); a slowdown in tourism requires tourism operators to apply different marketing strategies for business success. Due to the lack of any literature on spiritual tourism marketing, the literature from the parent marketing discipline was adapted to assist in the development of appropriate spiritual tourism marketing theory. The spiritual tourism product, as a type of special interest tourism, has the potential for growth since interest in spirituality related matters is on the rise. New pilgrimage routes are developed and old pilgrimage routes upgraded, revived and marketed through PPP in South Asia to promote the sustainability of spiritual tourism (ADB 2008).

In agreement with the OECD (1997) conference on partnerships in tourism, it was concluded that the establishment of public and private sector partnerships is instrumental as it is closely linked with the improvement of the effectiveness of national tourism administrations (NTAs) and national tourism organisations (NTOs). PPP further is useful for implementing tourism policies more effectively in the areas of employment, education and marketing and other areas of tourism policy. Governments have to play an important role in new ways of organising this co-operation, notably by defining a clear national strategy for tourism policy which will stimulate and guide innovative partnerships, develop new products and give incentives to all individual partners to participate in the development. Partnerships should seek to establish a balance between competition and co-operation, focusing on the advantages of economies of scale and the creation of synergies between the partners in marketing of spiritual tourism products. European Union Commission (2007) also concluded in its report that in the field of cultural heritage management, Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) is a promising new governance mechanism to balance increasing pressure of market forces on the one hand and government's responsibilities in protecting public cultural values on the other hand.

Moreover, spiritual tourists tend to travel to satisfy their specific needs even when the economic, financial and political situation is not favourable. This paper presents the view that considerable potential exists for spiritual tourism product if marketed effectively. In this research, the PPP framework is presented as one approach to effectively apply the tourism marketing mix for marketing spiritual tourism. Future research would involve an attempt to empirically test the application of the PPP and tourism marketing mix for spiritual tourism by adopting a quantitative as well as qualitative methodology. In the next stage a research survey instrument will be designed and distributed to selected public and private tourism operators in India, Pakistan, Italy and Thailand to test the application of the PPP to tourism marketing mix for the product of spiritual tourism as suggested in this paper.

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