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The Spirituality of Tour Guides and their Impact on Visitors Experience at Sacred Sites

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Pilgrimage and the Evolution of Spiritual Tourism
Waterford Institute of Technology
9th March 2018
Sacred Ireland

Delve into Sacred Ireland and marvel at monastic brilliance
Louth to Longford in 3 days
Tags: Churches, Historic & Heritage, Storytelling
Locations: Louth, Longford
Add to wishlist

Immerse yourself in the land of saints and scholars
Longford to Kilkenny in 3 days
Tags: Churches, Historic & Heritage, Storytelling
Locations: Kilkenny, Longford
Add to wishlist

Take a spiritual trail across this Early Christian bastion
Tipperary to Louth in 3 days
Tags: Churches, Historic & Heritage
Locations: Tipperary, Louth, Ophaly, Tipp
Add to wishlist

Wonder at witches and weddings in saint-laden lands
Wicklow to Kilkenny in 3 days
Tags: Churches, Historic & Heritage, Museums & Attractions, On the Water, Outdoors, Storytelling
Locations: Carlos, Kilfe, Kilkenny, Lemon, Wicklow
Add to wishlist
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample of Sacred Sites</th>
<th>Visitor Numbers 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knock Shrine</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Patricks Cathedral Dublin</td>
<td>385,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holycross Abbey, Co. Tipperary</td>
<td>240,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock of Cashel</td>
<td>240,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croagh Patrick, Mayo</td>
<td>220,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin</td>
<td>157,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly</td>
<td>138,481</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glendalough (numbers for Visitor Centre)</td>
<td>79,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballintubber Abbey</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Audeons Church</td>
<td>26,548</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery</td>
<td>26,460</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jerpoint Abbey, Co Kilkenny</td>
<td>20,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Derg</td>
<td>20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brigit’s Garden, Galway</td>
<td>17,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ennis Friary, Co. Clare</td>
<td>15,747</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Ann’s Church, Dublin</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunbrody Abbey &amp; Visitor Centre</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mellifont Abbey, Monasterboice, Co. Louth</td>
<td>12,182</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sligo Abbey</td>
<td>11,802</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skellig Micheal</td>
<td>11,577</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tintern Abbey, New Ross, Co Wexford</td>
<td>9,814</td>
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<td>Boyle Abbey</td>
<td>9,164</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loughcrew</td>
<td>7,224</td>
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<td>Ardfert Cathedral, Co. Kerry</td>
<td>6,286</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Mary’s Abbey (Dublin)</td>
<td>4,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Mary’s Collegiate Church, Youghal.</td>
<td>3,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattery Island</td>
<td>1,121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enongene, V. & Griffin, K. (2018)
Sacred Ireland

Do you know why they call Ireland the Land of Saints and Scholars? Follow the pilgrims routes across Irelands Ancient East and early Christian history is revealed. But some sacred sites are even older, and still burn brightly...

Today you can still criss-cross Irelands Ancient East on pilgrims’ routes, and feel the presence of those early Saints and Scholars at every turn.

And like so much in this part of the world, there’s an even deeper story to tell.
Telling Stories

‘Place is space which has become an organised world of meaning’
Yi-Fu Tuan

Sacred spaces need to be:
1. Identified
2. Marked out and bounded
3. Enhanced and explained
4. Managed and stage managed

Dee Dias (earlier today)

https://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/stories.htm
Why Tour Guides

- Tour-guides play a **vital role** in the visitor experience,
- Significantly impact on the sort of experiences visitors get at sites visited

(Cohen et al., 2002; Pizam & Riechel, 1996)

- Key elements in the complex interaction between the visitor and the sites visited

(Cohen-Hattab and Shoval, 2015)

"Interpretation is the revelation of a larger truth that lies behind any statement of fact."

~ Freeman Tilden (1883-1980)
Research Rationale

Role of Tour Guides in Visitor Experience Management at sacred sites is poorly examined.

How their Spirituality Impacts on the Visitors Experience

Their Spirituality Influences Tour narratives; Interpretations of sites; Impact on Visitor Experience & Satisfaction

Enongene, V & Griffin K, (2018)
Towards a Definition of Spirituality

Spirituality is a process by which individuals recognise the importance of Orienting their lives to something non-material that is beyond or greater than themselves so that there is an acknowledgement of and at least some dependence upon a higher power which is invisible or spirit

(Martin & Carlson, 1999)

Spirituality is more of an individual practice, it also relates with the process of developing beliefs around the meaning of life & Connection with others

(Cavanagh et al., 2001 & Guillory)

Spirituality has been defined as our inner consciousness a specific form of work feeling that energises action, sometimes a world view plus a path”

(Cavanagh et al., 2001 & Guillory)
Spirituality in the Workplace

- Managers bring their **deepest spiritual values** to bear on their work
- Many **Believing managers** say that their relationship with **God** Influences their work lives more than any other factor
  
  (Research on managers & spirituality at work McCormick, 1994)

- **‘Lived Spiritualities’** i.e. the way spirituality is acted out in everyday life
- **‘Reflective Spiritualities’** which is an interpretation and the way of communication of this experience

  (Sharma & Bharti, 2014)
Research Question

How Does the Spirituality of Tour Guides / Leaders Influence Visitor Experience and Satisfaction at sacred sites?
Research Objectives

- To **Advance** theoretical knowledge on sacred site visitor experience management **from the managerial perspective**

- To **Examine** the extent to which Tour-Guides spirituality-based- actions, attitudes and behaviours **influences** their tour narratives and **interpretation** of the site

- To **Evaluate** the **implications** of their spirituality- based - **actions** in effectively catering to a diverse visitor requirement
Research Methods

- Semi-structured Interviews & Focus Group Discussions
- Tour-Guides & Leaders
  - Diverse Range of Irish Sacred Sites
- Data Analysis
  - Interviews manually Transcribed
  - Thematic Analysis
Most of our visitors come for pilgrimage, and I don’t have a strong religious connection, I come from an Atheist background I can’t give them a most religious focused tour.

Most of the Americans who come here do not really have a Christian belief, they just come to make links with their ancestry, so we can give our own twists and turn it to our own interest, so I usually give it towards a European perspective. But we try to almost finish with a religious theme.
Because I deal a lot with the Christian side, I always ask the tour groups whether or not they are Christians so, I stick with the other side so the visitors don’t get lost.

I make reference to things that would not necessarily be in Josh’s tours. I talk about the seclusion of women in......if you are talking about things like this to people who are not Christians then it does not make sense and its not worth it.
Research Findings

- The spirituality of the Tour guides or leaders, either based on religion or upon secular influences to a great extent the sort of experience visitors get at these sacred sites.

- The **less spiritual**, focus their **narrative** towards the historical and archaeological aspect of the site.

- Tour Leaders **wield absolute power** to deliver the tours in ways that best suit them, those who considered themselves **more spiritual** tended to direct their **narratives** to include more religious aspect of the site.
Summary

- The spirituality of Tour-guide / leader significantly impacts on visitor experience and satisfaction.

- Tour-guide / Leader attitude and approach to site interpretation significantly influences their narrative, and thus impacts on visitor experience and satisfaction at sites.
Research implications

- Research has significant implication for sacred site visitor experience management.
- Need to understand how the socio-psychological characteristics of sacred site tour-guides/leaders impact on the visitor’s experience.
- And effects on the image of holy places.
Thank You