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Tourist behavior at the religious festivities of Peru: Virgen de las Mercedes and Lord captive of Ayabaca

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Abstract

Religious tourism is a way of positioning the culture of a community through the faith of the pilgrims, which is reflected in the visit to the temples, mosques, historical monuments or some religious manifestation that is considered of respect in a society. The objective was to analyze the characteristics of human behavior that are associated with the pilgrimage and the tendency of human groups. The study applied a mixed, non-experimental, descriptive-correlational level approach. The study sample was consisting of 700 people, who were selected through a convenience sampling. Among the results it was obtained that we can observe that there is a positive relationship with intensity of regulating to very strong between the instruction level variable and the dimensions of tourist behavior in the religious festivities of Paíta and Ayabaca. It is concluded that it is a form of travel that combines cultural, spiritual and economic aspects, being able to promote the preservation of religious inheritance, promote interreligious dialogue and provide spiritual well-being to visitors.

Keywords: *Tourism, religion, pilgrims, feast, faith.*

Introduction

The global political situation that the planet is going through as a result of the health crisis experienced in recent years, has generated serious problems for the tourism sector that are graphed in social and cultural behavioral patterns creating new trends that must be analyzed. The precipitous outbreak of the coronavirus or also called COVID-19, revealed the importance, but at the same time, the vulnerability of being part of a globalized society and the impact generated by government actions and decisions on human behavior. Given the announced declaration of the state of emergency in the country, measures were adopted to control the health crisis regulated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and that directly affected the tourism industry (confinement and closure of borders). The difficulties of traveling during the space of the health crisis generated by COVID-19, made the possibilities of touring the country and providing guarantees of a safe trip greatly reduced (Velandia, 2020). Thus, in Peru, from receiving 4.4 million foreign tourists and entering 4.7 million USD in foreign currency, it went to 850 thousand between January and

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October 2020, a drop of 76.8% almost uniform in all markets of origin. MIncetur estimated that tourism fell in 2020 by 69.8% from 46.8 million trips to 14.7.

Religious tourism is a sector that grows year after year and becomes a sustainable way of traveling (Tobón and Tobón, 2013; Vásquez et al., 2016). With the passage of time, after the health crisis, religious tourism could be a model of behavior for the entire tourism sector (Lo, 2020). For Koçyigit (2016) the main motivation in Religious Tourism is the need to travel to explore the spiritual and religious needs of a place, as well as to know the culture of other nations and / or religions exploring their sacred objects, affirms that, the intertwining of religion with tourism highlights the historical context of a place, Religion is perceived as one of the most common causes of human migration.

In the same way, pilgrimage becomes a pattern of behavior prone to increase, so this is described as a voluntary act of veneration highly valuable for all religions of the world. However, Gonzales et al. (2021) consider that the concept of pilgrimage has been renewed since contemporary times and can now be associated with the person who travels or travels from a certain point to a sanctuary, city or locality related to some tradition, history or cultural product guided solely by their Faith. (Lo, 2020).

In this context, this research aims to analyze the characteristics of human behavior that are associated with pilgrimage and the tendency of human groups to migrate from one place to another in search of travel experiences focused on cultural thought, FÉ and emotional context. Thus, the religious festivals of the Piura region have been taken as a reference; the Virgen de las Mercedes in Paita and the Señor Cautivo de Ayabaca that have an international connotation, given that in the months of September and October respectively, visitors usually arrive from all over the region of the country and even from the neighboring countries of northern Peru.

1. Religious festivities in Peru

Religion is the meaning and preservation of a parameter of belief that is commonly transmitted by the family; allows the human being to connect with the present and his past, denoting a relationship of dependence with the actions of the gods (Castañeda et al. 2023). This line of thought gives meaning to the world and society, transmitting it to individuals through collective memory.

At present, popular religiosity is positioned as a means of integral evangelization, which is structured in three dimensions that are linked to each other; a) the vertical dimension: relationship with the divine; (b) the horizontal dimension: relationship with others and society; and (c) the inner dimension: source of spiritual strength (Lydon, 1990; Tala and Padurean, 2008).

The Feast of the Captive Lord of Ayabaca and the Virgen of Mercedes of Paita fit into the concept of popular religiosity, since it has been characterized by a high level of theological reflection and impact on the masses that are manifested in the group of pilgrims who walk to the sanctuary venerating the image during the months of October and September in the north of the country

intrapyschic birth and tourism that has a modern development and focuses on the experience giving it a connotation of intrapsychic experience (Vázquez and Pérez, 2017). Sánchez and Pérez (2016) indicate that the changes caused by modernity have allowed traditional religion to evolve and to venture into the daily life of human beings. Currently, new trends appear in which travelers opt for new alternatives that lead to more attractive experiences and cultural and religious valuation (Carranza et al., 2011). Along the same lines, Fernández (2012) indicates that "Today popular religiosity grows and religious tourism is formalized and disseminated in a special way by the tourism secretariats of the corresponding governments and by the ecclesiastical authorities" (p. 29), thereby demonstrating the modern development of religion focused on tourism.

For Shyamchandra (2018) and Aguirre (2021) tourists move between different places based on different motivations, including religious ones, given that tourism has been considered as the industry of the world. Scholars have included pilgrimage within religious tourism considering it as a historical phenomenon that reflects the ancient way of doing tourism (Moreno and Rodríguez, 2021; Bravi, 2019). This fact represents a historical phenomenon that has been considered as the oldest form of tourism. Collins (2010) defines pilgrimage as the eternal journey to an externally holy and internally spiritual place that encompasses the self-knowledge of the human being. This fact highlights its group connotation, leaving in evidence the sense of fraternity, unity and cooperativity when taking care of each other during the displacement until it culminates with veneration (Farfán, 2014).

For Macedo (2012) the characteristics that identify this group of people are the different desires, motivations or intentions that the same tourist has together with what he expects to find when arriving at the religious destination. The spaces recognized as sacred have crystallized as a meeting point for human groups that come to the place moved by the need to pilgrimage, know, appreciate and acquire spiritual experiences of great cultural significance Martínez (2012).

Therefore, the profile of the behavior of people who decide to opt for this type of tourism is oriented to the fact that they usually have outstanding characteristics that frame the sense of their displacement and the internalization of the tourist experience from the emotional side, given that, one of the important aspects that attracts it to the religious tourist site, it is the fulfillment of the promise, which is conceptualized as the commitment of reciprocity with God or with a saint where the corresponding intersection is sought before a particular need and it is through the act of devotion that the person thanks the interceptor and at the same time expresses his faith before the veneration of the saint (Farfan, 2014). Framing religious tourism and its connotations as one of the most important bases for community social organization.

3. Methodology

For the development of the research, a mixed approach was applied, since quantifiable data were used by statistical techniques and interviews were developed that allowed the generation of qualitative results. The design is non-experimental, since there was no manipulation of variables,

of descriptive-correlational type, since the relationship of both variables under study was sought. Likewise, the data collection was cross-sectional, through the application of the survey technique whose instrument was two questionnaires addressed to visitors and pilgrims of the religious festivities of the Virgen de las Mercedes and the Señor Cautivo de Ayabaca. The sample consisted of 700 people from the provinces of Paita and Ayabaca, the type of sampling was convenient, since, due to the availability of visitors and pilgrims to the aforementioned festivities, a certain number of people were available, who through a Google form responded voluntarily. It should be noted that the Kolgomorov-Smirnov test (K-S) was applied, which according to Moráquez (2015), is a goodness of fit test; in view of the fact that, it is interested in the degree of agreement between the distribution of a set of values of the sample and some specific distribution. A documentary review of publications related to sustainable tourism, religious tourism and pilgrimage has been taken into account that allowed to verify, contrast and substantiate the theories cited in the article. In this sense, the methods applied were the synthesis and analysis to reach consensus of the existing conceptualizations.

4. Results

Interview 1. Brotherhood of Pilgrims the Providence of the Lord Captives La Arena – Piura

A member of the brotherhood relates the suigéneris of his Faith to the captive Lord of Ayabaca, the same one who was oriented to the healing of one of his children of a serious illness, since, through a promise to fulfill the saint, every year he travels to the Sierra Piurana to celebrate the religious festivity, this activity has been repeated for more than 13 years, fulfilling his promise for health, for family, for work and life.



Figure 2 Pilgrimage to the feast of the Captive Lord of Ayabaca.

Source: Photo prepared in Ayabaca by the authors.

Interview 2

In this case, the reason for the pilgrimage was consulted to the member of the brotherhood, who

commented that he must fulfill a promise of health to the Captive Lord of Ayabaca, for this reason, he traveled every year to the religious festival. She maintained that she was a victim of cancer, but that her faith in the image cured her; And that is why, to date, the pilgrimage is inevitable. In both cases it is denoted that the pilgrim has a very consistent Faith that motivates him to walk day after day and even kneel before the venerated image.

In Table 1, we can see that, to determine the type of distribution of the variables studied, the normality test was carried out, through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness fit test (K-S). Hence, the results indicate that there is no normal distribution, since ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, for the testing of the hypotheses, based on the fact that the data are not parametric, the Spearman Correlation Coefficient statistic was used.

Table 1 Goodness of fit test to the normal curve for the study variables in visitors to the religious festivals of Paita and Ayabaca.

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnova		
	Statistical	Gl	Gis.
Gender of the visitor	,373	719	,000
Age group to which you belong	,342	719	,000
Place of origin	,345	719	,000
Visitor's Level of Instruction	,283	719	,000
Reason for the visit	,278	719	,000
Continuity time of the visit	,296	719	,000
Learning model	,418	719	,000
Form acquisition of custom	,357	719	,000
Affective factors you experience during the visit	,501	719	,000
Main reasons for the visit	,296	719	,000

Note: a. Lilliefors significance correction

In Table 2, we can see that there is a positive relationship with regular to very strong intensity between the variable of the sex of the visitor and the dimensions of the behavior of the tourist in the religious festivities of Paita and Ayabaca.

From what was found, it is highlighted that the factor called forms of acquisition of habit, is the one that has obtained the highest correlational value that amounts to 0.906** marking a stronger relationship compared to the affective factors that obtained the value of 0.477** that indicates a relationship with lower intensity.

Table 2 Relationship between the sex of the visitor and the dimensions of the behavior of the tourist in the religious festivities of Paita and Ayabaca.

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Rho</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>N</i>
Reason for the visit	0,828**	0,000	719
Continuity time of the visit	0,903**	0,000	719
Learning model	0,742**	0,000	719
Form acquisition of custom	0,906**	0,000	719
Affective factors you experience during the visit	0,477**	0,000	719
Main reasons for the visit	0,894**	0,000	719

Gender of the visitor

Note: The correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (bilateral)

In Table 3, we can see that there is a positive relationship with regular to very strong intensity between the variable of the Age Group and the dimensions of tourist behavior in the religious festivities of Paita and Ayabaca.

From what was found, it is highlighted that the factor called time of continuity of the visit, is the one that has obtained the highest correlational value that amounts to 0.924** marking a stronger relationship compared to the affective factors that obtained the value of 0.431 ** that indicates a relationship with lower intensity.

Table 3. Relationship between the Age Group and the dimensions of tourist behavior in the religious festivities of Paita and Ayabaca.

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Rho</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>N</i>
Reason for the visit	0,824**	0,000	719
Continuity time of the visit	0,924**	0,000	719
Learning model	0,650**	0,000	719
Form acquisition of custom	0,794**	0,000	719
Affective factors you experience during the visit	0,431**	0,000	719
Main reasons for the visit	0,923**	0,000	719

Note: The correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (bilateral)

In Table 4, we can see that there is a positive relationship with regular to very strong intensity between the variable of Place of Origin and the dimensions of tourist behavior in the religious festivities of Paita and Ayabaca. From what was found, it is highlighted that the factor called Main reasons for the visit, is the one that has obtained the highest correlational value that amounts to 0.936** marking a stronger relationship compared to the affective factors that obtained the value of 0.453 ** that indicates a relationship with less intensity.

Table 4. Relationship between the place of origin and the dimensions of tourist behavior in the religious festivities of Paita and Ayabaca.

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Rho</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>N</i>
Reason for the visit	0,834**	0,000	719
Continuity time of the visit	0,935**	0,000	719
Learning model	0,693**	0,000	719
Form acquisition of custom	0,846**	0,000	719
Affective factors you experience during the visit	0,453**	0,000	719

Main reasons for the visit	0,936**	0,000	719
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Note: The correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (bilateral)

In Table 5, we can see that there is a positive relationship with regular to very strong intensity between the variable of Educational Level and the dimensions of tourist behavior in the religious festivities of Paita and Ayabaca. From what was found, it is highlighted that the factor called Reasons for the visit, is the one that has obtained the highest correlational value that amounts to 0.868** marking a stronger relationship compared to the affective factors that obtained the value of 0.561 ** that indicates a relationship with lower intensity.

Table 5. Relationship between the Level of Education and the dimensions of tourist behavior in the religious festivities of Paita and Ayabaca.

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Rho</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>N</i>
Reason for the visit	0,868**	0,000	719
Continuity time of the visit	0,848**	0,000	719
Learning model	0,651**	0,000	719
Form acquisition of custom	0,752**	0,000	719
Affective factors you experience during the visit	0,561**	0,000	719
Main reasons for the visit	0,844**	0,000	719

Note: The correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (bilateral)

Religious tourism is a growing segment within the tourism market. It includes those trips whose main objective is to visit sites considered sacred or of religious importance. These places are often centers of devotion and pilgrimage for people who practice certain religions or who seek a spiritual experience. Religious tourism destinations can vary widely in terms of their meaning and attraction. Some examples are Jerusalem, Rome, Mecca, Varanasi, Lumbini and the Vatican, which are important destinations for different religions.

These places possess significant historical and cultural value, as they are associated with important religious events, prominent religious figures, or sacred tales. Thus, it has a complex composition due to the multiple elements that influence travelers who decide to undertake these trips. These elements include religious, cultural, traditional, spiritual and landscape factors. Some people may

be motivated by reasons of faith and desire to participate in religious rituals or practices in a sacred place. Others may be interested in exploring and learning about different religious traditions and cultures (Serrallonga and Hakobyan, 2011).

The behavior of tourists on a religious holiday can vary depending on several factors, such as the culture and social norms of the place where the holiday is celebrated, as well as the individual beliefs and values of tourists. Likewise, they usually show respect towards the religion and beliefs of the locals. This involves following established rules and protocols during the holiday, such as dressing appropriately, respecting holy places, and participating respectfully in religious ceremonies. In most cases, conscientious tourists tend to be sensitive to the local culture and try to understand the customs and traditions associated with the religious holiday.

This involves avoiding offensive or inappropriate behaviour, and following the instructions of the premises regarding the rules of behaviour and etiquette. Thus, in the case of the religious festivals Virgen de las Mercedes and the Lord Captive of Ayabaca, tourists and pilgrims usually adapt to the custom following the established religious protocols.

Conclusions

Religious tourism is a way of traveling knowing sacred places, historical sites and spiritual centers with the purpose of participating in religious activities, deepening the faith and knowing more about a certain religion. It also plays a significant role in the preservation and dissemination of the cultural and spiritual heritage of different communities. Pilgrimage sites and religious sites bear witness to practices and rituals that have been passed down over generations, contributing to the identity and cohesion of communities. Thus, it can have a significant economic impact on the regions that host it. Pilgrims and religious visitors often spend money on accommodation, transportation, food, souvenirs and other related activities. This can generate employment and local economic development, especially in areas that rely heavily on tourism.

Religious tourism can foster dialogue and understanding between people of different religious beliefs. By visiting holy sites and participating in rituals, tourists have the opportunity to learn about the practices and teachings of religions other than their own, which can promote religious respect and tolerance. It often focuses on the spiritual and emotional well-being of visitors. Visiting sacred sites can bring a sense of peace, renewal, and connection to the divine. This can contribute to personal well-being and the search for existential answers.

The behavior of the tourist in Ayabaca and Paita is influenced by the interest in culture and religion, the search for authentic experiences, respect for the local community, interaction with the population and environmental responsibility, likewise, by adopting an appropriate and respectful behavior, tourists can enjoy an enriching experience and contribute to the sustainable development of the area.

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