

**EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS CELEBRITY ON DESTINATION EXPERIENCE:  
A CASE OF SOLMOE SHRINE**  
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Bona Kim, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Hospitality Business Program  
Singapore Institute of Technology  
BoNa.Kim@SingaporeTech.edu.sg

Yong Chen, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne  
HES-SO // University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland  
yong.chen@ehl.ch

**Abstract:**

A great deal of academic research has been devoted to examining the effects of secular celebrities, however little attention has been paid to spiritual or religious celebrities, nor are their impacts explored by academic studies on consumption in general and travel experience in particular. We aim to investigate the effects of spiritual celebrity on how visitors perceive a destination as well as their pilgrimage experience. Our study has shown that the direct relationships between the religious side and destination sides are weak in shaping tourist experience, but the indirect effects of both celebrity trustworthiness and expertise on destination image and attachment are robust, in which spirituality plays a crucial mediating role. These results suggest that spirituality is a key medium through which tourists can close the gap between pilgrimage on the spiritual side and their experience on the destination side

**Keywords:**

Religious celebrity, Pope's visit, spirituality, destination image, destination attachment, eudaimonia

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Celebrity is a famed and influential figure under the spotlight of a wide range of social domains from pop culture, sports, politics, business, art, to military (McCracken, 1989). Among the most famed is Pope Francis, the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church, who is labeled as a celebrity by ordinary people regardless of their religious denominations. Not only are his journeys across the world a manifestation of his religious leadership, but they have also attracted tens of thousands of people, including non-believers, who are eager to embark on the journeys he undertook at different destinations (Papal Visit, 2015). For instance, the Korean pilgrimage shrine, which the Pope visited in 2014, has seen a steady increase in tourist arrivals ever since, recording more than 500 visits on weekdays, amounting up to 3,500 on weekends (Choi, 2015). The visit of the Pope seemed to have popularized the pilgrimage destination from pilgrims to secular recreationists and mass tourists, generating profound implications for destination development.

Due to the effects of celebrities in boosting brand awareness, companies have invested handsomely in celebrity endorsement for creating favorable cooperate images (Erdogan, 1999). Studies addressing the celebrity effects primarily focused on secular celebrities, ranging from movie stars, singers to elite athletes, by featuring them in various advertisements and commercials (Erdogan, 1999), yet little attention has been paid to spiritual celebrities, nor are their impacts on pilgrimage destinations explored. While previous studies showed that pilgrimage sites provide various chances for retreat, meditation, and healing (Gesler, 1996; MacCannell, 1976; Peelen & Jansen, 2007), what remains under explored is how the presence of religious celebrities would transform a destination perceived by tourists, and ultimately affect tourists' behavior and wellbeing. We aim to investigate the effects of spiritual celebrities on how tourists perceive a destination as well as their travel experience.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Since celebrities can draw considerable public interests and attention, they can increase the publicity of a product, and thus are likely to affect consumer choice (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995; Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; Byrne, Whitehead, & Breen, 2003; Misra & Beatty, 1990). Underlying this process is celebrity endorsement, the key to corroborating public beliefs in the product. Because of people's obsession with celebrities, a product is believed more credible if it is endorsed by celebrities (Glover, 2009; Pringle, 2004). According to McCracken (1989), depending on how consumers associate the meanings of a product with an endorser, the endorser's credibility can be mirrored in, and transferred to, the product. Since a destination can be seen as a product, tourists can perceive it by defining its image and generating emotional attachment to the destination (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Veasna, Wu, & Huang, 2013). Thus, celebrity endorsement has also been used to promote destinations, through affecting destination image and awareness (Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008; Yen & Croy, 2016). This eventually leads to destination choice anchored by the image of the celebrity (Glover, 2009).

Besides celebrity endorsement, celebrity attractiveness is instrumental in affecting consumer choice (Amos et al., 2008; Erdogan 1999). While attractiveness does not necessarily lead to the effectiveness of endorsement (Caballero et al., 1989), studies showed that trustworthiness and expertise, which are the two sources of celebrity attractiveness, can increase the effectiveness of

celebrity endorsement (Chao et al., 2005). Previous studies also examined the relationship between celebrity and people's emotions attached to a place, or place attachment in short (Kim, 2012; Lee et al., 2008; Wong & Lai, 2015). Place attachment would be amplified, when celebrity endorsement for a place is reliable. Studies found that the attractiveness of a destination is originated from celebrity endorsement, and the obsession of celebrities can be translated into enduring place attachment (Kim, 2012; Lee et al., 2008; Wong & Lai, 2015).

Yet what is peculiar to religious celebrities is spirituality. According to Elkins et al. (1988, p. 10), spirituality is "a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, life, and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate." Despite a new construct in consumer behavior research, spirituality gradually makes its way to scientific research particularly in psychology (Piedmont, 1999; Ulvoas-Moal, 2010). Since spirituality is people's quest for and deep involvement in a religion (Shafranske & Gorsuch, 1984), it implies a transcendent dimension of human's experience (Piedmont, 1999; Piedmont et al., 2009). Spiritual transcendence suggests "the capacity of individuals to stand outside of their immediate sense of time and place to view life from a larger, more objective perspective" (Piedmont, 1999), and thus can fundamentally influence human behavior in various contexts (Piedmont et al., 2009).

Previous research in destination choice has concluded that more favorable destination image leads to stronger place attachment (Kaplanidou et al., 2012; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Veasna et al., 2013). Nevertheless, little is known about the associations of these constructs in relation to religious destinations. We argue that destination choice and experience would vary substantially when pilgrimage destinations are under investigation not least because they accommodate pilgrims. More importantly, pilgrimage destinations, coupled with religious celebrities, signify the spirituality of a destination, a concept that has not been addressed in destination choice. Besides destination image and destination attachment, tourists may see a pilgrimage destination that imbues their travel with purpose and meaning, which is a behavioral outcome related to eudaimonia and happiness yet is barely known in the tourism literature.

### 3 METHODS

#### 3.1 Study Site

We chose Solmoe Shrine located in Dangjin city in the province of Chungcheong, Korea as the study site. Solmoe Shrine is known as the Bethlehem of Korea for being the birthplace of the first Korean Catholic priest "Saint Andrew Daegeon Kim." Chungcheong became one of the regions where Catholicism was initially disseminated in Korea, and evolved as one of the earliest and largest faithful communities in Korea to embrace Catholicism in 1784–1785 (Solmoe Shrine, 2019). Therefore, not only is the Shrine recognized as a pilgrimage landmark called "Martyrs' home" where 11 martyrs were produced, but it was also listed as the 529th National Register of Historic Place to be a historical relic (Solmoe Shrine, 2019).

In 2014, Pope Francis visited Korea, mainly to beatify 124 Korean martyrs and celebrate Asia Youth Day (AYD), the biggest Catholic youth festival in Asia and was held in Daejeon in Korea. Solmoe Shrine was among the first sites during the Pope's Korean visit for the opening

ceremony of the event. In fact, as a cultural exchange, the AYD festival itself attracts both local and international pilgrims. Shortly after his visit in 2014, the religious site has become a popular attraction for both pilgrims and tourists. According to the statistics from the Solmoe Shrine (2018), visitor numbers in Solmoe Shrine surged in and after the Pope's visit in 2014, reaching at an unprecedented number of 153 thousand. While the visitor numbers have leveled off ever since, the average over in the recent four years doubles that of the pre-visit period (Figure 1).

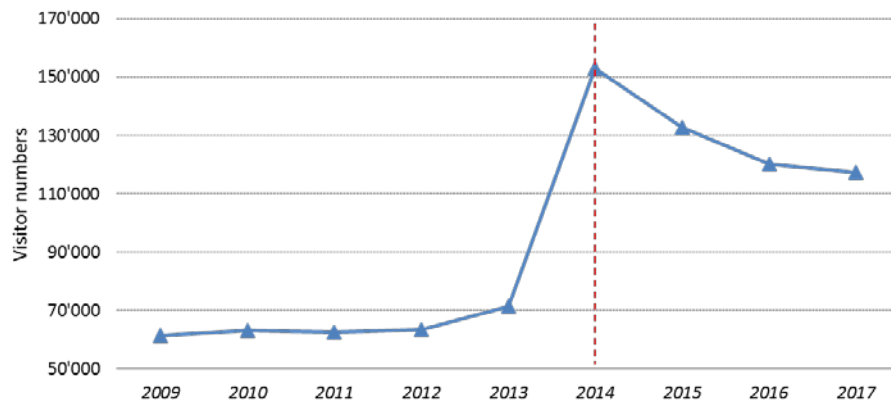


Figure 1. Visitor numbers at the Solmoe Shrine (2009–2017)

### 3.2 Measurement Scales

Seven constructs that specified the hypotheses were measured by multiple item scales adopted from past studies. All the items were operationalized using a 7-Likert scale, indicating 1 = totally disagree, 4 = natural to 7 = totally agree. As for celebrity endorser, previous studies adopted diverse dimensions of celebrity's image. Lee et al. (2008) and Yen and Croy (2016) adopted three dimensions of celebrity involvement, including attraction, centrality to lifestyle and self-expression. van der Veen and Song (2014) used two dimensions of attractiveness and believability in measuring perceived image of a celebrity endorser. We followed Kim et al. (2014) to adopt three dimensions of celebrity image, namely trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness. We used a 15-item measure of spirituality, 12-item of place attachment, and three items of eudaimonia. We used eight items to measure the affective image of Solmoe shrine. All the measurement items were extracted from prior studies and revised to adapt to the context of this study.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Because the potential respondents were mainly Koreans, an English version of the questionnaire that consist of the measurement and social demographics was first developed and then translated into Korean. Prior to conducting the main survey, a pilot test and several interviews with priests and nuns living in the shrine were conducted to validate the measurement of the constructs. In the main survey, a questionnaire was administered to visitors at the shrine in May and June in 2018. Respondents were identified by asking two screening questions regarding their motivation and recognition about the Pope's visit at Solmoe Shrine. To increase participation, each respondent who completed the survey was offered an incentive for appreciation. Of the 346 questionnaires collected, 337 were checked valid for further data analysis.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Profiles of Respondents

Table 1 shows sociodemographic profile of the respondents. Of the 337 respondents, more than three-fourths (75.1%) were females. Over 50% of the respondents aged 60 or above, including one-third (34.4%) between 60 and 69, and 16.6% was above 70 years old, those below 40 years old only made up 10%. Such a female- and elderly dominance was hardly seen in other tourist behavior studies. Not surprisingly, a whopping of 88.4% of the respondents were married, echoed to the age distribution. Those obtained university graduate education accounted for the largest (nearly 50%), followed by those with high school education (30.3%). The distribution of occupation was strikingly uneven, with 52.2% of the respondents being civil servants, while each of the rest of nine other occupations accounting for less than 10%. We found that low-income respondents outnumbered their high-income counterparts, with 62% (below 4,001) versus 38% (above 4000). All respondents exclusively reported Roman Catholic as their religion. When asking to rate their level of religious belief, 68% of the respondents stated that they were religious or very religious.

Table 1. Profiles of the respondents ( $N = 337$ )

<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>			<i>(to be continued)</i>		
M	83	24.6	Professional	13	3.9
F	253	75.1	Housewife/husband	13	3.9
<i>Marital status</i>			Businessman/woman	19	5.6
Single	37	11.0	Company employee	3	.9
Married	298	88.4	Civil servant	176	52.2
Other	2	.6	Retired	11	3.3
<i>Age</i>			Other	35	13.4
< 20	1	.3	<i>Income</i>		
20–29	10	3.0	Under \$20,000	73	21.7
30–39	23	6.8	\$20,001–30,000	52	15.4
40–49	59	17.5	\$30,001–40,000	84	24.9
50–59	72	21.4	\$40,001–50,000	29	8.6
60–69	116	34.4	\$50,001–60,000	35	10.4
> 70	56	16.6	\$60,001–70,000	13	3.9
<i>Education</i>			Over \$70,001	51	15.1
High school graduate	102	30.3	<i>Religious belief</i>		
University student	27	8.0	Not very religious	5	1.5
University graduate	164	48.7	Religious	12	3.6
Postgraduate	44	13.1	Neutral	91	27.0
<i>Occupation</i>			Religious	177	52.5
Student	29	8.6	Very religious	52	15.4
Service/sales	28	8.3			

Table 2 shows the travel profile of the respondents visiting Solmoe Shrine at the time of this survey. All respondents had known that the Pope visited Solmoe Shrine during his visit in Korea in August 2014, of which 72.1% indicated that they knew the purpose of the Pope's visit. Around 44.5% and 38.3% of the respondents had known Solmoe Shrine before and after the Pope's visit, respectively. Nearly 80% of the respondents acknowledged the historical

importance of the Solmoe Shrine. Approximately 54.3% of the respondents were repeat visitors. Pilgrimage (retreat) is the predominant travel purpose (88.7%), while tourism accounts for only 8.6%. When considering travel motivations ( $M > 5.55$ ), the respondents in general underlined the importance of religious celebrities in their decision of visiting Solmoe Shrine.

Table 2. Travel experience related to the Pope's visit

<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Aware of purpose of the Pope visit</i>			<i>(to be continued)</i>		
Y	243	72.1	<i>Visit experience</i>		
N	78	23.1	Once	154	45.7
Unreported	16	4.7	Twice	95	28.2
<i>Aware of the Shrine after the Pope visit</i>			Three times	41	12.2
Y	129	38.3	Four times	15	4.5
N	203	60.2	Five times or more	32	9.5
Unreported	5	1.5	<i>Visit purpose</i>		
<i>Whether visited the Shrine before the Pope visit</i>			Pilgrimage (retreat)	299	88.7
Y	150	44.5	Tourism	29	8.6
N	185	54.9	Others	9	2.7
	2	.6	Travel motivations	Mean	S.D.
<i>Aware of the historical importance of the Shrine</i>			Mo1	5.89	1.574
Y	269	79.8	Mo2	5.88	1.568
N	52	15.4	Mo3	5.72	1.697
	16	4.7	Mo4	5.55	1.725

## 4.2 Measurement Model

Table 3 shows the various criteria to assess the reliability of the seven constructs. All the factor loadings of the constructs were statistically significant and greater than the cutoff value of .70, suggesting that the indicators measured their corresponding constructs quite well (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2014). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$ s of all constructs exceeded the threshold of .70 suggested by Nunnally (1978) and Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), indicating high internal consistency of the constructs. Due to Cronbach's  $\alpha$ 's limitations, we used composite reliability to further assess the internal consistency, and the results showed high level of internal consistency despite that a higher above .90 composite reliability is not desirable in this regard (Hair et al., 2017). We also used the Rho\_A defined by Dijkstra-Henseler to check the reliability of the constructs, and the values are above .70, suggesting high reliability.

Table 3. Reliability of the constructs

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Factor loading</i>	<i>rho_A</i>	<i>Composite reliability</i>	<i>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></i>
<i>Celebrity trustworthiness (CT)</i>		.989	.992	.989
Sincere	.976***			
Trustworthy	.988***			
Reliable	.979***			
Honest	.978***			
Dependable	.976***			

<i>Celebrity expertise (CE)</i>		.963	.971	.963
Knowledgeable	.910 <sup>***</sup>			
Qualified	.925 <sup>***</sup>			
Expert	.946 <sup>***</sup>			
Skilled	.943 <sup>***</sup>			
Experienced	.939 <sup>***</sup>			
<i>Celebrity attractiveness (CA)</i>		.956	.968	.956
Attractive	.941 <sup>***</sup>			
Classy	.929 <sup>***</sup>			
Elegant	.944 <sup>***</sup>			
Good-looking	.943 <sup>***</sup>			
<i>Spirituality (SP)</i>		.955	.961	.954
Fulfillment and bliss	.792 <sup>***</sup>			
Inner strength and/or peace	.864 <sup>***</sup>			
Spiritual plane of consciousness	.859 <sup>***</sup>			
Step outside of ambitions and failures	.872 <sup>***</sup>			
Distraction from my prayers	.858 <sup>***</sup>			
Share common bond	.875 <sup>***</sup>			
Plane of consciousness or spirituality	.868 <sup>***</sup>			
Emotional bond with all of humanity	.849 <sup>***</sup>			
Meaning to life	.855 <sup>***</sup>			
<i>Destination image (DI)</i>		.940	.941	.927
Distressing	.793 <sup>***</sup>			
Gloomy	.836 <sup>***</sup>			
Dull	.803 <sup>***</sup>			
Inhospitable	.892 <sup>***</sup>			
Unfamiliar	.869 <sup>***</sup>			
Non family-oriented	.872 <sup>***</sup>			
Unfamous	.759 <sup>***</sup>			
<i>Destination attachment (DA)</i>		.961	.965	.960
Shrine means a lot to me	.801 <sup>***</sup>			
Connection to the Shrine	.827 <sup>***</sup>			
Tell many people about this trip	.871 <sup>***</sup>			
Bring children or acquaintances	.847 <sup>***</sup>			
Meaningful to visit the Shrine	.791 <sup>***</sup>			
Identity is tied to my visit	.806 <sup>***</sup>			
Committed to the Shrine	.832 <sup>***</sup>			
Enjoyed visiting the Shrine	.882 <sup>***</sup>			
Satisfaction out of visiting the Shrine	.884 <sup>***</sup>			
Visiting the Shrine is important	.868 <sup>***</sup>			
Wouldn't substitute doing	.770 <sup>***</sup>			
Fond memories of the Shrine	.823 <sup>***</sup>			
<i>Eudaimonia (EM)</i>		.932	.956	.932
Worthwhile	.939 <sup>***</sup>			
Accomplishment	.936 <sup>***</sup>			
Meaningful	.939 <sup>***</sup>			

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 4 shows various criteria to check the validity of the seven constructs. The average variance extracted (AVEs) of all constructs are above .50, (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014), indicating that satisfactory convergent validity is met. The square roots of all constructs' AVEs were larger than the corresponding inter-construct correlations, indicating the measurement model had satisfactory discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014). In addition, we used the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) as an alternative method

based on the HTMT<sub>.90</sub> criterion and the HTMT<sub>inference</sub> in checking discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015), because the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the assessment of cross-loadings were criticized for their failure to detect discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 4 shows that there are minor issues of discriminant validity (CT and CE, CT and CA, CE and CA), all are related to celebrity attractiveness, we therefore retained these constructs in the model for path analysis.

Table 4. Validity of the reflective constructs

	CT	CE	CA	SP	DI	DA	EM
CT	(.980)						
CE	.881	(.933)					
CA	.927	.933	(.939)				
SP	.412	.421	.393	(.855)			
DI	.310	.325	.330	.355	(.833)		
DA	.370	.391	.370	.678	.433	(.834)	
EM	.298	.302	.290	.609	.421	.724	(.938)
AVE	.960	.870	.882	.731	.694	.696	.880

Note: Values in parentheses are the square root of the AVEs of the corresponding constructs.

EM = Eudaimonia, DA = Destination attachment, DI = Destination image, SP = Spirituality, CA = Celebrity attractiveness, CE = Celebrity expertise, and CT = Celebrity trustworthiness.

Table 5. Discriminant validity assessment using heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	CT	CE	CA	SP	DI	DA
CE	<b>.901</b> [.837, .944]					
CA	<b>.953</b> [.925, .971]	<b>.972</b> [.950, .989]				
SP	.422 [.288, .545]	.437 [.310, .555]	.410 [.277, .536]			
DI	.319 [.187, .459]	.336 [.202, .477]	.345 [.213, .483]	.371 [.259, .480]		
DA	.378 [.233, .513]	.405 [.269, .529]	.385 [.245, .512]	.705 [.624, .775]	.444 [.331, .555]	
EM	.310 [.175, .443]	.318 [.191, .438]	.308 [.175, .434]	.645 [.555, .726]	.443 [.321, .562]	.765 [.692, .831]

Notes: The results marked in bold indicate discriminant validity problems according to the HTMT<sub>.90</sub> criterion; HTMT<sub>inference</sub> does not indicate discriminant validity problems.

EM = Eudaimonia, DA = Destination attachment, DI = Destination image, SP = Spirituality, CA = Celebrity attractiveness, CE = Celebrity expertise, and CT = Celebrity trustworthiness.

### 4.3 Structural Model

Table 6 shows the coefficients of the structural relationships and the corresponding confidence intervals. Of the 17 structural relationships in the model, nine were statistically significant at .05, and the directions of the relationships were consistent with the hypotheses. The R<sup>2</sup> shows that 56.2% of the variance in EM was explained by all its predictors, 50.7% of the variance in DA was explained by its predictors. Table 6 presents the  $f^2$  values, which were used to assess the contribution of an exogenous construct to an endogenous construct's R<sup>2</sup>. According to Hair et al. (2014) criteria, we found that the three religious constructs as the predictors, namely CT, CE and



CA, had negligible effects on endogenous variables for tourist behavior, namely DI and DA, as  $f^2$  values were far below .02, the cutoff value to satisfy a small effect (Hair et al., 2014). By contrast, the effect of SP, a mediator in our model, had significant effects in explaining tourist-relevant behaviors as well as EM, with the  $f^2$  values ranging between .052 and .500. Also, DI and DA were found to have substantial effects in explaining EM, with the  $f^2$  values at .025 and .325.

Table 6. Path estimates

<i>Path</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Confidence interval 95%</i>
CT → CA	.470***	.038	[.388, .538]
CT → SP	.294	.167	[-.058, .596]
CT → DI	-.065	.127	[-.329, .172]
CT → DA	-.015	.108	[-.224, .196]
CE → CA	.519***	.036	[.452, .595]
CE → SP	.388*	.166	[.091, .731]
CE → DI	.024	.120	[-.187, .289]
CE → DA	.087	.099	[-.111, .283]
CA → SP	-.242	.209	[-.647, .158]
CA → DI	.262	.143	[-.007, .560]
CA → DA	.012	.134	[-.256, .269]
SP → DI	.268***	.059	[.154, .386]
SP → DA	.570***	.052	[.465, .663]
SP → EM	.206**	.060	[.086, .321]
DI → DA	.203***	.055	[.100, .315]
DI → EM	.117*	.050	[.023, .221]
DA → EM	.534***	.064	[.403, .658]

*Notes:* EM = Eudaimonia, DA = Destination attachment, DI = Destination image, SP = Spirituality, CA = Celebrity attractiveness, CE = Celebrity expertise, and CT = Celebrity trustworthiness.

$R^2$ : CA: .920; DA: .507; DI: .169; EM: .562; SP: .189.

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 7. Values of  $f^2$  size

	CT	CE	CA	SP	DI	DA	EM
CT	.000	.000	<b>.622</b>	.015	.001	.000	.000
CE	.000	.000	<b>.757</b>	<b>.024</b>	.000	.002	.000
CA	.000	.000	.000	.006	.007	.000	.000
SP	.000	.000	.000	.000	<b>.070</b>	<b>.500</b>	<b>.052</b>
DI	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	<b>.069</b>	<b>.025</b>
DA	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	<b>.325</b>
EM	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

*Notes:* EM = Eudaimonia, DA = Destination attachment, DI = Destination image, SP = Spirituality, CA = Celebrity attractiveness, CE = Celebrity expertise, and CT = Celebrity trustworthiness.

On the one hand, we found compelling evidence for the effects of CT and CE on CA. Specifically, there are significantly positive associations between CT and CA ( $\beta = .470$ ), CE and CA ( $\beta = .219$ ), CE and SP ( $\beta = .388$ ). On the other hand, we found that the associations between behavioral constructs, namely DI, DA and EM, are significant positively, and all these three constructs are affected by SP. Nevertheless, note that all the eight nonsignificant structural relationships in the model are the direct paths between religious constructs and behavioral constructs. These results suggest that tourists' religious attributes may have little to do with their behavioral patterns. This may explain that religious tourists do not regard the fulfillment of tourist activities as important as other travelers do. This can be accounted for, in part, by their

visit purposes, as we found that nearly 90% of the respondents indicated their visit purpose as pilgrimage, less than 10% as tourism.

#### 4.4 Mediation Analysis

We further examined the mediation effects of the three constructs in the model, namely CA, SP and DI. Except for CA, the indirect effects between religious constructs and behavioral constructs are verified. Specifically, the total indirect effects of CT on DI are statistically significant ( $\beta = .172$ ), suggesting the mediation effect of CA. We found that the total indirect effect of CE on DI ( $\beta = .207$ ) and on EM ( $\beta = .236$ ) are statistically significant. However, no indirect effects are detected of CA on all behavioral constructs, suggesting that CA is not a predictor of tourist behavior in the religious context. We found that all the indirect effects of SP are significant in the model, and the indirect effect of DI on EM is also significant.

Table 8. Total indirect effects

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
CT:				
CT → SP	-.114	.098	1.163	.245
CT → DI	.172*	.082	2.100	.036
CT → DA	.130	.109	1.189	.234
CT → EM	.111	.102	1.084	.278
CE:				
CE → SP	-.126	.110	1.139	.255
CE → DI	.207*	.086	2.400	.016
CE → DA	.203	.114	1.784	.074
CE → EM	.236*	.093	2.530	.011
CA:				
CA → DI	-.065	.060	1.081	.280
CA → DA	-.098	.139	.704	.482
CA → EM	-.072	.132	.549	.583
SP:				
SP → DA	.054**	.020	2.686	.007
SP → EM	.365***	.044	8.280	.000
DI:				
DI → EM	.108**	.034	3.167	.002

Notes: EM = Eudaimonia, DA = Destination attachment, DI = Destination image, SP = Spirituality, CA = Celebrity attractiveness, CE = Celebrity expertise, and CT = Celebrity trustworthiness.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

We further present specific indirect effects (Table 9), which help us understand how the mediation effects are derived. In particular, the effect of CT on DI is mediated by CA, and SP is the mediator between CT and DA. We also detected a series of mediation effects from CT → SP → DA → EM, in which SP and DA are two subsequent mediators. When it comes to CE, all the mediation effects are statistically significant. In particular, we found that SP is the most pronounced mediator in the model. Not only does SP mediate the effects of religious constructs on behavioral constructs, it also mediates the relationship between EM and its predictors. These results suggest the central role of SP in predicting tourist behavior in a religious context.

Table 9. Specific indirect effects

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
CT:				
CT → CA → DI	.123*	.068	1.815	.070
CT → SP → DI	.079	.050	1.591	.112
CT → SP → DA	.168*	.096	1.748	.081
CT → SP → EM	.060	.040	1.513	.130
CT → SP → DA → EM	.090*	.051	1.746	.081
CE:				
CE → CA → DI	.136*	.076	1.802	.072
CE → SP → DI	.104**	.053	1.982	.048
CE → SP → DA	.221**	.097	2.279	.023
CE → SP → EM	.080*	.042	1.912	.056
CE → SP → DA → EM	.118**	.054	2.180	.029

Notes: EM = Eudaimonia, DA = Destination attachment, DI = Destination image, SP = Spirituality, CA = Celebrity attractiveness, CE = Celebrity expertise, and CT = Celebrity trustworthiness.

\*  $p < .1$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

## 5 CONCLUSION

We aimed to establish the association between religious celebrities and the secular tourism consumption. On the religious side, we found strong and robust relationships between the image of religious celebrity, measured by trustworthiness and expertise, and celebrity attractiveness. As the key concept in studying the effects of religious celebrity on tourist experience with a pilgrimage destination, spirituality depends much on trustworthiness and expertise but not on attractiveness. This result might suggest one of the biggest differences between secular celebrities and religious celebrities when it comes to assessing the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. On the destination side, we verified the well-established relationship between destination image and attachment, which is also applicable to pilgrimage destinations. While both destination image and attachment affect eudaimonia, the effect of destination attachment is much stronger. This is probably because destination attachment underscores the internal emotional bond, which echoes the meaning and fulfillment in tourist experience.

Our study has shown that the direct relationships between the religious side and destination sides are weak in shaping tourist experience. Specifically, we did not find evidence for the direct effects of either celebrity trustworthiness or celebrity expertise on destination image and attachment. Of the only significant association was between celebrity attractiveness and destination image. These results suggest that neither the presence of religious celebrities at a destination nor tourists' awareness of their presence can be directly transformed into tourists' experience with the destination. Thus, the influence of religious celebrities is perhaps obscure in creating tourist experience. However, we found that the indirect effects of both celebrity trustworthiness and expertise on destination image and attachment are robust, in which spirituality plays a crucial mediating role. These results suggest that spirituality is a key medium through which tourists can close the gap between pilgrimage on the spiritual side and their experience on the destination side. As far as the Solmoe Shrine is concerned, the attractiveness of the destination lies at spirituality as an ultimate value of life, which was unleashed by the visit of Pope Francis as a religious celebrity.

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