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## EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS CELEBRITY ON DESTINATION EXPERIENCE: THE CASE OF SOLMOE SHRINE

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**Abstract:**

12 A wealth of academic research has devoted to examining the effects of secular celebrities rather  
13 than the effect of spiritual celebrities on consumption and travel experience. We aim to  
14 investigate the effects of a religious celebrity on how visitors perceive a destination as well as  
15 their pilgrimage experience. Our study has shown that the indirect effects of both celebrity  
16 trustworthiness and expertise on destination image and place attachment are robust. These results  
17 suggest that spirituality plays a crucial mediator through which visitors can close the gap  
18 between pilgrimage on the spiritual side and their consumption experience on the destination  
19 side.  
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**Keywords:**

23 Religious celebrity; spirituality; destination image, place attachment; eudaimonia; Pope Francis  
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45 Published in "International Journal of Tourism Research", 2020, vol. 22, no. 1, pp.  
46 1-14, which should be cited to refer to this work.  
47 DOI: 10.1002/jtr.2314  
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

A celebrity is a famed and influential figure in the spotlight of a wide range of social domains from pop culture, sports, politics, business, to arts, to name a few (McCracken, 1989). Since celebrities draw a great deal of public interest and attention, they are likely to affect people's perception of a product or brand through substantiating its visibility and credibility (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995; Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; Byrne, Whitehead, & Breen, 2003; Misra & Beatty, 1990). Underlying all these effects is celebrity endorsement, which is used in developing public beliefs in a product endorsed by a celebrity because of people's obsession with the celebrity (Glover, 2009; Pringle, 2004). A celebrity possesses a variety of cultural meanings that go beyond the celebrity himself or herself, and are further conveyed to a product or brand, thereby enriching the connotation of the product or brand in consumers' minds (Brierley 1995; McCracken 1989). While the celebrity does not transform the product or brand entirely, he or she is still able to influence people's decision-making through affecting their perception of the product and even altering their preference to it (Glover, 2009).

A wealth of academic research has been devoted to examining the effects of secular celebrities, such as movie stars, singers and elite athletes, through featuring them in advertising and commercials (Erdogan, 1999). Little attention has been paid to religious celebrities, or their impact on consumption in general and travel experience in particular. As a matter fact, their effects have been constantly evidenced by mass media (Bacon, Leger, & Madhani, 2015; CNN, 2019). Among the most famed religious contemporaries would be Pope Francis, the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church. Across the globe not only are his trips a manifestation of his religious leadership, but they have also attracted hundreds of thousands of people, including other celebrities and non-believers, to embark on the journeys he undertook (Papal Visit, 2015). For instance, the Korean pilgrimage shrine in the Daejeon diocese, which the Pope visited in 2014, has seen a steady increase in tourist arrivals ever since (Choi, 2015). The Pope's visit has popularized the shrine from serving pilgrims to attract mass tourists, generating profound implications for destination development.

While previous studies showed that pilgrimage sites provide various chances for retreat, meditation, and healing (Gesler, 1996; Peelen & Jansen, 2007), how the presence of religious celebrities would transform a destination perceived by visitors, and ultimately affect their behavior and wellbeing has gone largely underexplored. This study aims to investigate the effects of religious celebrities on how visitors perceive and experience a destination. We aim to bridge the gap between pilgrimage and religious celebrities on the spiritual side and visitor experience and wellbeing on the consumption side. This examination focuses on testing the effects of spirituality that is peculiar to religious celebrities on how visitors conceive, perceive and experience a destination. Since spirituality represents people's ultimate quest for meaning and fulfillment, we further test whether the eudaimonia of tourists is affected by their awareness of religious celebrities at a pilgrimage site. This study suggests the importance of religious celebrities in developing pilgrimage tourism, which would benefit not only devout pilgrims at international levels but also local communities such as residents, religious organizations and governments.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Celebrity Trustworthiness, Expertise and Attractiveness

The effectiveness of a celebrity endorsement is built on three dimensions, namely trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness, since they are instrumental in affecting consequent consumer behavior (Amos et al., 2008; Kim, Lee, & Prideaux, 2014; Magnini, Garcia, & Honeycutt Jr, 2010; Ohanian, 1990, 1991; van der Veen & Song, 2010, 2014). Considering the peculiarities of religious leaders, trustworthiness is at the heart of celebrity endorsement, which is an indiscernible attribute that they possess in the eyes of their disciples and even of ordinary people as a favorable consequence of trust (Amos et al., 2008; Magnini et al., 2010). Various facets of trustworthiness, including honesty, integrity, and believability, can therefore be conveyed to consumers through the endorsement of a product, and thereby affect people's perception of the product (Amos et al., 2008; Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001; Magnini et al., 2010). Celebrity expertise is made up of competency, expertness, qualification, mastery, and authoritativeness in the area where the celebrity is competent (Kim et al., 2014). Because such expertise is a reliable source of recommendation from the celebrity based on his/her professional skills, experiences, or knowledge, it affects people's decision-making, especially those who deeply admire the celebrity (Amos et al., 2008; Magnini et al., 2010).

Another relevant attribute is celebrity attractiveness, while differs from celebrity trustworthiness and expertise due to its multi-dimensional nature. Celebrity attractiveness entails not only physical attractiveness but also social and psychological attractiveness, such as a celebrity's personality traits and charisma (Amos et al., 2008; Erdogan, 1999). Previous research asserted that trustworthiness and expertise have positive effects on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in advertising products and building up brands (Chao, Wührer, & Werani, 2005). However, Caballero, Lumpkin, and Madden (1989) found that celebrity attractiveness is of little effect on endorsement effectiveness. In addition, trustworthiness and expertise are, to some extent, reflected in a similar consciousness like believability, which also signifies a credible source of celebrity (Simpson & Kahler, 1980; van der Veen & Song, 2010, 2014). Therefore, the three attributes can be considered respectively. Celebrity's physical and personality features can be transferred from trustworthiness and expertise in affecting endorsement effectiveness. We argue that whether and to what extent celebrity attractiveness affects celebrity effectiveness depends on what constitutes celebrity attractiveness due to its multifaceted nature. If celebrity attractiveness is underpinned by the inherent trustworthiness and expertise, an association between celebrity attractiveness and effectiveness can be drawn. We therefore propose:

H1: Trustworthiness of celebrity positively affects attractiveness of celebrity.

H2: Expertise of celebrity positively affects attractiveness of celebrity.

## 2.2 Religious Celebrity and Spirituality

Spirituality is a concept in questing the meanings of consumer behavior, yet it is underexplored largely due to the chasm between divine pilgrimage and worldly living (Piedmont, 2001; Ulvoas-Moal, 2010). It is spirituality that distinguishes between religious celebrities and their secure counterparts. Yet as a fabric of an individual's experience embedded in universal threads of religions, spirituality is the inner depth of one's psychological status (Piedmont, 1999),

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3 representing people's ultimate quest for and deep involvement in a religion (Gorsuch &  
4 Shafranske, 1984). Thus, spirituality, if anything, would affect secular consumption at least for  
5 pilgrims and the like. Such effects are accomplished by what is called spiritual transcendence,  
6 suggesting an individual's ability to reflect his or her life from an objective perspective by  
7 standing outside his or her immediate sense of a time and place (Piedmont, 1999; 2001).  
8 Spiritual transcendence recognizes the limitedness of perspectives and considers a vision of life  
9 that satisfies more fundamental urges of nature (Piedmont, 1999).  
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12 However, unclear is what makes up the dimensions of spirituality that can account for religious  
13 tourism and tourist experience with pilgrimage destinations (Sharpley, 2009; Sharpley &  
14 Sundaram, 2005). When it comes to religious celebrities, it is essential to advancing incumbent  
15 models of celebrity effects through articulating the associations between the three dimensions of  
16 celebrity effectiveness and spirituality. As long as the effects of religious celebrities are  
17 concerned, the model advancement helps better explain the role of spirituality in generic  
18 consumption and, in particular, tourist experience. We can thus articulate the role of a religious  
19 celebrity in popularizing pilgrimage sites as tourist destinations, as well as how the awareness of  
20 the celebrity's presence affects visitors' deep psychological status in tourism consumption. We  
21 therefore propose:  
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25 H3: Trustworthiness of celebrity positively affects spirituality.

26 H4: Expertise of celebrity positively affects spirituality.

27 H5: Attractiveness of celebrity positively affects spirituality.  
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### 29 2.3 Celebrity Spirituality, Destination Image, and Place Attachment

#### 30 2.3.1 *Destination image and place attachment*

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33 Destination image is tourists' cognitive and affective evaluations of a destination, including their  
34 knowledge, feelings and impressions associated with the destination (Baloglu & McCleary,  
35 1999; del Bosque & San Martín, 2008; Li & Stepchenkova, 2012). Studies show that the  
36 affective component of destination image is an antecedent of emotions and feelings attached to  
37 the destination (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Williams & Vaske 2003). Such  
38 place attachment indicates the extent to which individuals value the benefits that certain places  
39 provide in their travel experience (Moore & Graefe, 1994), suggesting an emotional bond  
40 between individuals and the place they visited (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson,  
41 1992). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that studies have found that a favorable destination  
42 image leads to strong place attachment (Kaplanidou, Jordan, Funk, & Ridinger, 2012; Prayag &  
43 Ryan, 2012; Veasna, Wu, & Huang, 2013). Veasna et al. (2013) confirmed that destination  
44 image significantly influences the emotional part of destination attachment. Kaplanidou et al.  
45 (2012) found that destination image increases place attachment but highlighted that atmosphere  
46 and cultural characteristics of a destination are the important antecedents of place attachment.  
47 We propose:  
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51 H6: Destination image positively affects destination attachment.  
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#### 53 2.3.2 *Celebrity endorsement on destination image and place attachment*

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Celebrity endorsement is grounded in a strong linkage between celebrity image and product image in shaping consumer experience (Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Misra & Beatty, 1990; Till, Stanley, & Priluck, 2008). A celebrity-endorsed product becomes preferred by consumers because a favorable celebrity image perceived by consumers is being transferred to the product, and thus updates consumer preference in the decision-making process (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In particular, the two components of celebrity image, namely trustworthy and expertise are manifested in consumers' believability, indicating the valid and credible source of celebrity endorsement (Simpson & Kahler, 1980; van der Veen & Song, 2010, 2014). Kim et al. (2014) found that all three components of celebrity image influence corporate image of hotels, among which celebrity expertise is the most significant one. Since credible sources for endorsing tourist destinations are crucial (Erdem, Swait, & Louviere, 2002; Veasna et al., 2013), celebrities play an important role in substantiating endorsement credibility, leading to a positive destination image (Glover, 2009; Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008; Yen & Croy, 2016). We propose:

H7: Trustworthy of celebrity positively affects destination image.

H8: Expertise of celebrity positively affects destination image.

H9: Attractiveness of celebrity positively affects destination image.

Previous studies have examined the relationship between consumer involvement with a celebrity and their emotions attached to a place (Kim, 2012; Lee et al., 2008; Wong & Lai, 2015). Among these studies, Lee et al. (2008) underscored the effects of consumer involvement with a celebrity on place perception. Their study found that consumers' familiarity with the destination is influenced by the extent to which they are involved with the celebrity. Kim (2012) found that audience, who are highly involved in a TV program that portrays their favorite celebrities, are more likely to affirm their emotional attachment to celebrity and eventually to tourist destinations. In other words, when people are emotionally attached to a certain celebrity, they feel strong intimacy and familiarity with the place that is related to the celebrity. This result was later confirmed by Wong and Lai (2015), who went on to articulate that people's attachment to a celebrity positively affects their attachment to a place pertinent to the celebrity.

When the sources for destination endorsement are credible, tourists remain attached to the destination (Veasna et al., 2013). Therefore, the level of place attachment can be amplified by the endorsement from celebrities simply because trustworthiness remains at the heart of celebrity image. As previous studies found that the attractiveness of a destination stems, in part, from celebrity endorsement for the destination, the meanings that a celebrity possesses can be transferred to the destination, and thus enhance place attachment (Kim, 2012; Lee et al., 2008; Wong & Lai, 2015). In particular, tourists' strong emotional bond with a destination can be created under a circumstance in which a trip to the destination made by a favorite celebrity is considered as a type of pilgrimage (Lee et al., 2008; Ryan, Yanning, Huimin, & Song, 2009). We propose:

H10: Trustworthy of celebrity positively affects destination attachment.

H11: Expertise of celebrity positively affects destination attachment.

H12: Attractiveness of celebrity positively affects destination attachment.

### 2.3.3 *Spirituality and pilgrimage destinations*



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4 Religion has a significant effect on place attachment at sacred sites (Mazumdar & Mazumdar,  
5 2004). Given the importance of religion or religious activities in people's everyday lives, we can  
6 elicit the meaning of place through experiencing religious places and eventually facilitating  
7 devotion (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004). Yet the role of religion in creating personal meaning  
8 in a sacred space has been overlooked (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004). Thus, it is necessary to  
9 integrate personal meaning into the meaning of place at a spiritual level, thereby increasing the  
10 understanding of travel experience to a pilgrimage site. Studies show that spiritually committed  
11 consumers have a positive attitude toward consumption of goods and services in line with their  
12 spiritual values (Ulvoas-Moal, 2010). Since spirituality focuses on searching for existential  
13 meaning in life (Doyle, 1992; Piedmont, Ciarrochi, Dy-Liacco, & Williams, 2009), it is "a way  
14 of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension that  
15 is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, life, and whatever one considers  
16 to be the Ultimate" (Elkins et al., 1988, p. 10). Because affective image is highly related to  
17 individuals' emotions and feelings about an object (Gartner, 1994; Holbrook, 1978), from the  
18 psychological aspect spirituality is an important antecedent of affective destination image. We  
19 therefore propose:  
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24 H13: Spirituality positively affects destination image.

25 H14: Spirituality positively affects destination attachment.

#### 26 27 2.4 Eudaimonia 28

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30 Spiritual transcendence emphasizes a search for connection with sacredness, which can be  
31 explained in three domains: connectedness, universality, and prayer fulfillment (Piedmont, 1999;  
32 2001). According to Piedmont (1999, 2001), connectedness is a belief that a person belongs to a  
33 human orchestra whose contribution is essential to maintaining the harmony of life; universality  
34 is a unitive feature of life; and prayer fulfillment is an emotional state of joy and satisfaction  
35 derived from enlightenment with a transcendent reality. Spirituality in life emphasizes the  
36 affective side of humanity, the autonomous expressivity of an individual's life experience and  
37 experiential contact, which flow through other aspects of one's being to integrate, harmonize or  
38 balance the self (Heelas, 2009). Guo (2015) identified the model of spirituality as a  
39 reconceptualization of the self, containing the search for self-knowledge, adaptation of that  
40 knowledge, and the intellectual aspiration for self-transformation. Willson, McIntosh and Zahra  
41 (2013) investigated the process of how tourism provides travelers an opportunity to seek  
42 personal meaning in life and purposes of life in both religious and non-religious contexts. We  
43 propose:  
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47 H15: Spirituality positively affects eudaimonia.

48 H16: Destination image positively affects eudaimonia.

49 H17: Destination attachment positively affects eudaimonia.  
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#### 51 2.5 'Celebrization' of Religious Personalities 52

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54 Despite the fact that religious leaders have cemented the status of universal icons among their  
55 followers, there has been little research on the topic (Lanuza, 2017). A few studies have  
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3 attempted to investigate the social and economic impacts of the ‘celebritization’ of religious  
4 personalities in various contexts (Bae, Brown, & Kang, 2010; Barajas, Lago-Peñas, & Sanchez,  
5 2014; Brown, 2009; Lanuza, 2017). Although the process of celebritization is mainly associated  
6 with marketing strategies, Lanuza (2017) analyzed the current status of Pope Francis from the  
7 perspective of a social constructionist, concluding that unlike any other celebrities, the Pope is an  
8 icon that gives rise to the Catholic faith in the contemporary postmodern world. Specifically, the  
9 Pope was emphasized as a celebrity of people, whose commercial and sociocultural values are  
10 grounded in the long tradition of the Catholicism instead of a temporary fandom of spiritual  
11 customers. Because of these impacts, it was reported that the presence and trip of the Pope led to  
12 an increase of donation rate and mass attendance rate (Chua-Eoan, & Dias, 2013).  
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16 We explain the celebritization of religious personalities in the tourism context based on  
17 McCracken’s (1989) meaning transfer model. This model states that celebrity effectiveness is  
18 evaluated by how consumers associate the meaning of an endorser with a product and ultimately  
19 transfer them to the product. First, the cultural meaning of depth and power associated with a  
20 celebrity, including his status, class, and personality, are transferred to the product by the  
21 celebrity as an endorser. This meaning remains in people’s mind, and eventually, the meaning of  
22 brand is attained (Erdogan, 1999). This model explicates the meaning transfer of the celebrity  
23 that affects consumer consumption. Second, a world culturally constituted by the celebrity moves  
24 into consumer products and eventually to the life of the consumer. That is, the celebrity is a core  
25 player in the process of meaning transfer. Although this study laid a foundation for meaning  
26 transfer of a celebrity, it is restricted to explaining consumer products. In the tourism context, we  
27 expand the endorsement process by including the assessment of the tourist experience as shown  
28 in Figure 1.  
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32 [Insert Figure 1 here]  
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### 34 **3 METHODS**

#### 35 **3.1 Study Site**

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37 Solmoe Shrine located in Dangjin city in the province of Chungcheong, South Korea, was  
38 selected as the site of the present study. Solmoe Shrine is known as the Bethlehem of Korea for  
39 being the birthplace of the first Korean Catholic priest “Saint Andrew Daegeon Kim.”  
40 Chungcheong province was one of the regions where the doctrine of Catholicism was initially  
41 disseminated to Korea, and evolved as one of the earliest and largest faithful communities in  
42 Korea to embrace Catholicism in 1784–1785 (Solmoe Shrine, 2019). Therefore, not only is the  
43 Shrine recognized as a pilgrimage landmark also called “Martyrs’ home” where eleven martyrs  
44 are celebrated, but it was also listed as the 529th National Register of Historic Place in Korea  
45 (Solmoe Shrine, 2019).  
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51 Pope Francis visited South Korea in 2014, mainly to beatify 124 Korean martyrs and celebrate  
52 Asia Youth Day (AYD), the biggest Catholic youth festival in the Asia Pacific region and was  
53 held in the Daejeon diocese in Korea. Solmoe Shrine was among the first sites during the Pope’s  
54 Korea visit for the opening ceremony of the event. In fact, as a cultural exchange, the AYD  
55 festival itself attracted both local and international pilgrims. Shortly after his visit in 2014, the  
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3 religious site gained in popularity, among both pilgrims and tourists. According to statistics  
4 published by Solmoe Shrine (2018), visitor numbers hit a record high during and immediately  
5 after the Pope's visit, with 153,000 visitors recorded in 2014 alone. While visitor numbers have  
6 leveled off ever since, the average in the recent four years doubled that of the pre-visit period  
7 (see Figure 2).  
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10 [Insert Figure 2 here]  
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12 Since the Pope's discipleship visit in 2014, the municipal government of Dangjin initiated an  
13 urban attraction development project in the surrounding area of the Shrine as part of a special  
14 district development in the city. Besides creating his statue, topiary, and mural, the 1.9-km long  
15 street surrounding the Shrine was named after the Pope (Choi, 2017). Since 2017 the Catholic  
16 Cultural Center of Korea along with Pope Francis's Plaza and historical park has been under  
17 construction, and will be established as the cultural and district of Solmoe Shrine designated by  
18 the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Korea (Choi, 2017).  
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### 21 3.2 Measurement Scales 22

23  
24 A total of seven constructs that specified the hypotheses were measured with multiple item scales  
25 adopted from previous studies. All the items were operationalized using a 7-point Likert scale,  
26 indicating 1 = totally disagree, 4 = natural, to 7 = totally agree. As for celebrity endorser,  
27 previous studies adopted diverse dimensions to measure celebrity image. Lee et al. (2008) and  
28 Yen and Croy (2016) adopted three dimensions of celebrity involvement, including attraction,  
29 centrality to lifestyle and self-expression. Two dimensions of attractiveness and believability  
30 were used by van der Veen and Song (2014) to measure the perceived image of a celebrity  
31 endorser. We followed Kim et al. (2014) to adopt three dimensions of celebrity image, namely  
32 trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness. A 15-item measure of spirituality was used based  
33 on the measurement developed by Piedmont (1999), followed by eight items to measure the  
34 affective image of Solmoe Shrine (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). The  
35 items of destination image were measured on a 7-point bipolar scale. A 12-item measure of place  
36 attachment was based on Kyle, Graefe, and Manning (2005), and three items of eudaimonia was  
37 based on Chen and Li (2018). All the measurement items were extracted from previous studies  
38 and revised to adapt to the context of this study.  
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### 42 3.3 Data Collection 43

44 Since potential respondents were mainly Koreans, an English version of the questionnaire that  
45 consisted of the measurement and social demographics was first developed and then translated  
46 into the Korean language by a native researcher. Prior to conducting the main survey, a pilot test  
47 was conducted along with several interviews with priests and nuns living in the shrine to validate  
48 the measurement of the constructs. In the main survey, the questionnaire was administered to  
49 visitors at the shrine in May and June in 2018. Respondents were identified by asking two  
50 screening questions regarding their motivation and recognition of the Pope's visit to the Solmoe  
51 Shrine in 2014. To increase participation in the survey, each respondent who completed the  
52 survey was offered an incentive for appreciation. Of the 346 questionnaires collected, 337 were  
53 deemed valid for further data analysis.  
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## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Profiles of Respondents

Table 1 shows the 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 over one-third (34.4%) between 60 and 69, and 16.6% above 70 years old, those below 40 years old only made up 10%. Such a female- and elderly-dominance has been as marked in other tourist behavior studies. Not surprisingly, a whopping 88.4% of the respondents were married, reflecting the age distribution. Respondents who had obtained a university education accounted for the largest (nearly 50%), followed by those with a high school education (30.3%). The distribution of occupation was strikingly uneven, with 52.2% of the respondents being civil servants, while the other nine occupations accounting for less than 10% each. We found that low-income respondents outnumbered their high-income counterparts, with 62% (below 4,001) versus 38% (above 4000). All the respondents exclusively reported that they were Roman Catholic. When asked to rate their level of religious belief, some 68% of the respondents stated that they were religious or very religious.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Table 2 shows the travel profile of the respondents visiting the Solmoe Shrine at the time of this survey. All respondents were aware that the Pope had visited the Solmoe Shrine 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 heard of the Solmoe Shrine before and after the Pope's visit, respectively. Nearly 80% of the respondents acknowledged the site's historical importance. Approximately 54.3% of the respondents were repeat visitors. Pilgrimage (retreat) was the predominant travel purpose (88.7%) of the respondents, while tourism accounted for only 8.6%. When asked about their travel motivations ( $M > 5.55$ ), the respondents in general underlined the importance of religious celebrities in their decision to visit the Solmoe Shrine.

[Insert Table 2 here]

### 4.2 Measurement Model

Table 3 shows 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 adopted composite reliability to further assess the internal consistency of the constructs. The results showed high a level of internal consistency despite the assertion that a composite reliability of greater than 0.90 is not desirable in this regard (Hair et al., 2016). We also adopted the Rho\_A defined by Dijkstra-Henseler to check the reliability of the constructs, and the values were above .70, suggesting high reliability.

[Insert Table 3 here]

Table 4 shows various criteria to check the validity of the seven constructs. The average variance extracted (AVEs) of all constructs was above .50, (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014), indicating that satisfactory convergent validity was 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 adopted 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, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 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 5 shows that there were only minor issues of discriminant validity (celebrity trustworthiness and celebrity expertise, celebrity trustworthiness and celebrity attractiveness, celebrity expertise and celebrity attractiveness), all were related to celebrity attractiveness. We therefore retained these constructs in the model for path analysis.

[Insert Table 4 and 5 here]

#### 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 results show that 56.2% of the variance in eudaimonia was explained by all its predictors, 50.7% of the variance in destination attachment was explained by its predictors. Table 7 presents the  $f^2$  values, which were used to assess the contribution of an exogenous construct to an endogenous construct's  $R^2$ . According to Hair et al. (2014) criteria, we found that three religious celebrity constructs as the predictors, namely celebrity trustworthiness, celebrity expertise and celebrity attractiveness, had negligible effects on endogenous variables of tourist behavior, namely destination image and destination attachment. Indeed,  $f^2$  values were far below .02, which is the cutoff value to satisfy a small effect (Hair et al., 2014). By contrast, the effects of spirituality, a mediator in the model, were significant in explaining tourist-relevant behaviors as well as eudaimonia, with the  $f^2$  values ranging between .052 and .500. Also, destination image and destination attachment were found to have substantial effects in explaining eudaimonia, with the  $f^2$  values at .025 and .325, respectively.

[Insert Table 6 and 7 here]

On the one hand, we found compelling evidence for the effects of celebrity trustworthiness and celebrity expertise on celebrity attractiveness. Specifically, there were significantly positive associations between celebrity trustworthiness and celebrity attractiveness ( $\beta = .470$ ), celebrity expertise and celebrity attractiveness ( $\beta = .219$ ), celebrity expertise and spirituality ( $\beta = .388$ ). On the other hand, we found that the associations between behavioral constructs, namely destination image, destination attachment and eudaimonia, were significant positively, and that all three were affected by spirituality. Nevertheless, note that all the eight nonsignificant

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3 structural relationships in the model were the direct paths between religious constructs and  
4 behavioral constructs. These results suggest that tourists' experience and perception shaped by  
5 religious celebrities may have little to do with their behavioral patterns at the destination. This  
6 may explain why religious tourists, compared with other tourists, do not regard recreational  
7 tourist activities as important. This can be accounted for, in part, by their visiting purposes: we  
8 found that nearly 90% of the respondents were visiting in order to make a pilgrimage while  
9 tourism accounted for less than 10%.

#### 12 4.4 Mediation Analysis

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14 We further examined the mediation effects of the three constructs in the model, namely celebrity  
15 attractiveness, spirituality and destination image. Except for celebrity attractiveness, the indirect  
16 effects between religious constructs and behavioral constructs were verified. Specifically, the  
17 total indirect effects of celebrity trustworthiness on destination image were statistically  
18 significant ( $\beta = .172$ ), suggesting the mediation effect of celebrity attractiveness in the model.  
19 We found that the total indirect effects of celebrity expertise on destination image ( $\beta = .207$ ) and  
20 on eudaimonia ( $\beta = .236$ ) were statistically significant. However, no indirect effects of celebrity  
21 attractiveness on all behavioral constructs were detected, suggesting that celebrity attractiveness  
22 is not a predictor of tourist behavior in the religious context. We found that all the indirect effects  
23 of spirituality were significant in the model, and the indirect effect of destination image on  
24 eudaimonia was also significant.

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27  
28 [Insert Table 8 here]

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30 We further present specific indirect effects of the constructs in Table 9, which help articulate  
31 how the mediation effects were manifested in the model. In particular, the effect of celebrity  
32 trustworthiness on destination image was mediated by celebrity attractiveness, and spirituality  
33 was the mediator of the relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and destination  
34 attachment. We also detected a series of mediation effects from celebrity trustworthiness (CT) →  
35 spirituality (SP) → destination attachment (DA) → eudaimonia (EM), in which spirituality and  
36 destination attachment were two subsequent mediators in the model. When it comes to celebrity  
37 expertise, all the mediation effects were statistically significant. In particular, we found that  
38 spirituality was the most pronounced mediator in the model. Not only did spirituality mediate the  
39 effects of religious constructs on behavioral constructs, it also mediated the relationship between  
40 eudaimonia and its predictors. These results suggest the central role of spirituality in predicting  
41 tourist behavior in a religious context.

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45 [Insert Table 9 here]

## 46 5 CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

### 47 5.1 Theoretical Implications

48  
49 This study aims to investigate the effects of religious celebrity on visitors' spirituality and  
50 destination experience. We established the associations between religious celebrities and the  
51 secular tourism consumption. On the religious side, we found strong relationships between the

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3 image of a religious celebrity (measured by trustworthiness and expertise) and spirituality, which  
4 is a key concept in examining the effects of religious celebrity. Spirituality depends much on  
5 trustworthiness and expertise of the celebrity but not on his/her attractiveness. As far as the  
6 effectiveness of celebrity endorsement is concerned, the results suggest a striking difference  
7 between secular celebrities and religious celebrities. Previous studies found that all three  
8 dimensions of celebrity image affected the image of, or even customer loyalty to, an endorsed  
9 product or company (Amos et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2014). The attractiveness of secular  
10 celebrities is manifested in the physical aspects of celebrities, such as appearance (Amos et al.,  
11 2008; Erdogan 1999). By contrast, spiritual leaders who have achieved celebrity status are barely  
12 influenced by these physical aspects (Bae et al., 2010).  
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16 On the destination side, we verified the well-established relationship between destination image  
17 and place attachment (Kaplanidou et al., 2012; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Veasna et al., 2013)  
18 concerning pilgrimage destination. While both destination image and place attachment affect  
19 eudaimonia, the effect of place attachment is much stronger. This is because place attachment  
20 underscores the internal emotional bond (Veasna et al., 2013) between tourists and the  
21 destination by which the meaning and fulfillment of tourist experience can be augmented.  
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24 We found that the direct relationships between religious celebrity and tourist experience  
25 associated with the pilgrimage destination are weak. In particular, no strong evidence was found  
26 for the direct effects of either celebrity trustworthiness or celebrity expertise on destination  
27 image and place attachment. The only significant association was between celebrity  
28 attractiveness and destination image. Previous studies argued that celebrity endorsement as a  
29 credible source for destinations contributes to building up destination image (Erdem et al., 2002;  
30 Veasna et al., 2013). However, our study suggests that neither the presence of religious  
31 celebrities at a destination nor visitors' awareness of their presence can be directly enhanced into  
32 experience with the destination.  
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## 35 5.2 Practical Implications

36  
37 Unlike secular celebrities, religious celebrities propagate spiritual values in the contemporary  
38 world (Barajas et al., 2014; Lanuza, 2017). Pope Francis, for instance, has a great impact on  
39 sociocultural values of the society (Bae et al., 2010; Barajas et al., 2014; Brown, 2009). The visit  
40 of the Pope has become an extraordinary occasion for the Roman Catholic's 1.2 billion believers  
41 and even non-Catholics. The Pope has a positive impact on their emotional and spiritual  
42 perceptions, destination experiences and happiness. Being the highest leader of the Roman  
43 Catholic Church confers a significant status to the person occupying the position. However, not  
44 all popes become successful celebrities as many of them were well-known but did not achieve  
45 celebrity status. Although Pope Francis's presence and apostolic journeys have been highlighted  
46 as a celebrity culture that created the "spectacle" of Pope Francis, it should be distinguished from  
47 his charismatic prophetic message (Lanuza, 2017). Although the influence of religious celebrities  
48 is perhaps obscure in creating tourist experience, the indirect effects of both celebrity  
49 trustworthiness and expertise on destination image and place attachment are robust, in which  
50 spirituality plays a crucial mediating role.  
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55 Pilgrimage sites as religious destinations play a significant role in affecting spirituality and

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3 individuals' eudaimonia. In our study, Pope Francis's impact on pilgrims' spirituality and  
4 destination experience suggests a long-lasting cultural and experiential development of  
5 pilgrimage tourism. With increasing attention being paid to pilgrimage sites, the attractiveness of  
6 a destination, such as Solmoe Shrine, lies in the assertion that spirituality is as the ultimate value  
7 of life. It suggests the crucial role that religious celebrities play in destination development from  
8 a tourist's perspective. A deep understanding of the importance of celebrities in influencing  
9 destination image and place attachment can suggest a more proficient way toward destination  
10 sustainability. A religious shrine would offer spiritually fruitful opportunities for people from all  
11 over the world, and their experience with the shrine will enrich spirituality at the pilgrimage site  
12 as an ultimate value of life.  
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### 15 16 5.3 Limitations and Future Research

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18 This study has a couple of limitations. First, it was an investigation of one particular shrine along  
19 with a single occasion of the Pope's visit. Therefore, the results of this study might not be  
20 generalized to other pilgrimage destinations and other religious celebrities. We therefore suggest  
21 that the model be tested at other pilgrimage sites with the presence of other religious celebrities.  
22 Second, compared to other recreational tourist destinations, a pilgrimage destination is rooted  
23 deep in its history and religious ideology; therefore, tourists' awareness of them, in addition to  
24 the presence of religious celebrities, should be investigated. Finally, a reverse causality may exist  
25 between spirituality and tourist experience, suggesting that tourists' pilgrimage experience and  
26 eudaimonia can lead to spirituality. Therefore, future researchers should factor the reverse  
27 causality into research design and model development.  
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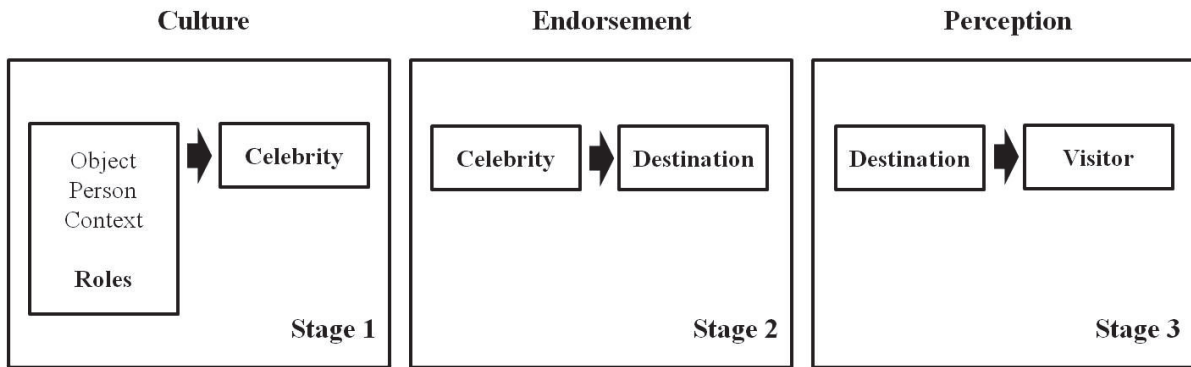
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Figure 1 Meaning transfer in celebrity endorsement



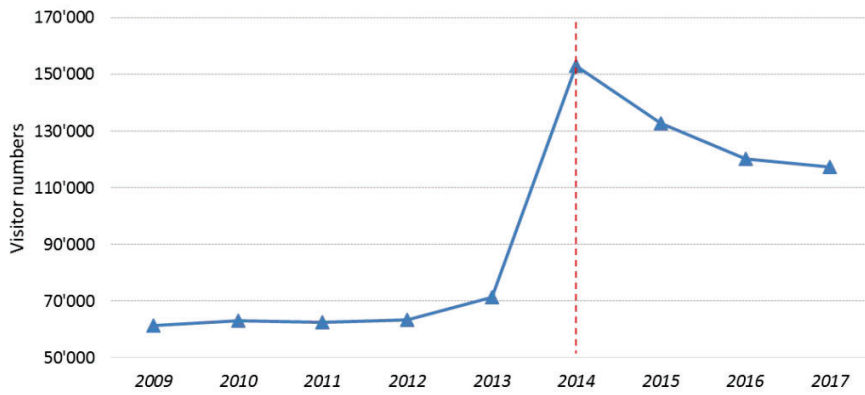
Note: 1) adapted from a study of McCracken (1989)  
2) ➡ indicates the path of meaning movement  
3) □ indicates each stage of meaning movement

Peer Review



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Figure 2 Visitor numbers at Solmoe Shrine (2009–2017)



For Peer Review

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 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	<i>Travel motivations</i>	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

Table 3 Reliability of the constructs

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

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Accomplishment	.936***
Meaningful	.939***

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

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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.

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.

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

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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.

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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.

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



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.

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