Religions Tourism in Melilla: Innovative but non-productive

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1. Summary

Religious tourism is a tourist product that is not novel (the pioneering form of tourism was in the form of visiting religious pilgrimages such as Christians traveling to Jerusalem and Muslims to Mecca). However, it contributes a lot of economic and social value in some parts of the world, and it could play a relatively important role in the tourist development of the Autonomous City of Melilla.

In this case study tries to show how an initiative presented by the Melilla Tourist Board since 2008 to make the different cultures and religions of the city known through the so-called "Route of the Temples," is not having the success it is supposed to have. This city can contribute as a differential value with other destinations, which do not visit museums, but visit places experienced daily, and that help to know a multicultural meeting of high experiential component in a border territory (Borrell, 2018).

In a single visit of a few hours one can understand many of the peculiarities of each cultural and religious identity, whose ignorance contributes to differentiate us and in some parts of the world makes it difficult to live together. "The Route of the Temples" takes advantage of the uniqueness of the city by

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showing tourists its cultural richness and variety, as well as the atmosphere of peaceful coexistence that can be breathed in its streets.

Four cultures live together without renouncing to their signs of identity, enriched by the daily contact Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus. Each of them contributes to their intangible cultural heritage. All these cultures show their spirituality and elaborate rituals in religious spaces that should attract many tourists and visitors.

2. Introduction

A. Religious Tourism

Tourism is growing, and how people take their holidays is also changing. The duration of holiday trips is shorter, and people are taking them more frequently over the year.

There is a preference for physically and intellectually active holidays, with a growing demand not only for recreational activities, sport, and adventure, but also for knowledge of the history, culture and environment of the places being visited.

Religious tourism is the pioneer form of tourism, which has begun almost with the dawn of humanity. Some of the religious places such as Mecca in Saudi Arabia, Fatima in Portugal, and Lourdes in France attract millions of religious tourists, creating a substantial financial transaction in the destination.

Cultural tourism is one of the most popular and fastest-growing sectors, within which religious tourism is overgrowing, despite being highly complex and fragmentary in its implementation and despite the management issues linked to the various and sometimes incompatible interests that are associated with it.

Cultural tourism is a travel as an educational, social, emotional, and participatory experience for the tourist, who seeks to 'live' the place he or she is visiting, get to know the people who inhabit it, understand their culture and buy their products (Trono, 2014). Besides, it entails contact with the residents and the creative flow of their living culture (Richards and Wilson, 2006.

Religious tourism is an essential part of the tourism industry, which usually related to the followers of particular faiths who visit locations that are considered as holy sites; religious sites are not only visited by the pilgrims but also visited by non-religious tourists since they have cultural, historical and religious significance. However, Melilla does not stand out as a place of

pilgrimage, and it stands out as a place where several interconnected religions can be observed in a totally peaceful and relatively small city.

In the literature of tourism studies are, often described interchangeably as a cultural heritage tourism, cultural tourism, cultural heritage tourism, and spiritual tourism by different authors.

Rinschede (1992) distinguishes these by duration, by group size, and by social structure. Gevorgian (2019) proposes two categories that differ in their motivation, namely "pilgrimage tourism" for spiritual reasons or to participate in religious rites, and "church tourism" to view

The most critical religious destinations in the world are so because historical events occurred there, generally at the beginning of religions or later because of particularly significant events.

Islamic: Al-Masjid Alharam – Mecca (Millions of pilgrims visit the Mecca and Medina) Al-Masjid Al Nabawe - Almadina Almunawwara (The second holiest site in Islam is the Al-Masjid an-Nabawi or the Prophet's Mosque situated in Medina), Al-Aqsa Mosque – Al-Qods, Palestine (Al Aqsa is the third holiest site in Islam and is located in the Old City of Jerusalem). It is located on the same site as the Dome of the Rock). Dome of the Rock (Qubbat Al-Sakhrah Mosque), Alqods, Palestine, Mezquita Quba, Almadina Almunawwara, Sultan Ahmed Mosque, Blue Mosque, Istanbul Turkey.

Christianity: Vatican City, Italy (Steeped in Christian tradition and history), Palestine (Church of the Nativity), Bethlehem (is a primary Christian holy site, as it marks the traditional place of Christ's birth) The Church of the Holy Sepulcher (where Jesus is believed to have been buried and resurrected), The Mount of Olives, Ephesus House of the Virgin Mary – Turkey (the House of the Virgin Mary). And much more places like: Lourdes (France) – Fatima (Portugal) Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Basilica de Guadalupe (Mexico City).

Judaism: Jerusalem AlQods (for three millennia, Jerusalem has been the center for the Jewish faith. Biblically, the old city of Jerusalem is recognized as the site where God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. King David established the city as the Kingdom of Israel and his son, King Solomon, built the first temple in the 10th century; Hebron (It is associated with the earth element, as it is the site of burial of the Jewish patriarchs; Tiberias (associated with the water element), Tzfat (associated with the air element, as it is the highest city in the Galilee region and the whole of Israel).

Buddhism: In India, Srilanka, Thailand, Nepal, Tibet, Japan, and Mongolia

B. Religious tourism in Melilla

In Melilla, there are no places with transcendental religious events, in a simple but also complicated way; it is a city where you can appreciate in the daily life the customs of each cultural and religious identity, with an absolute normality in the day today.

Four cultures live together in this place without renouncing to their signs of identity, enriched by the daily contact Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus coexist in harmony. Each of them contributes to their intangible cultural heritage. All these cultures show their spirituality and elaborate rituals in religious spaces that attract many tourists and visitors.

Although Toledo has always been the city par excellence in which the three religions and cultures that have passed through Spain throughout history have lived together, many forget Melilla when they say this, as it is the correct Spanish corner where even today not only Christians, Muslims and Jews live, but also a small Hindu community among them. Many are surprised by the latter. Many of them emigrated to Gibraltar, and from here, they would go to Melilla, settling with them their customs.

The experience of the visit to the temples gives the knowledge about other cultures and stimulates the reflection, increasing the comprehension of other people, and improving the relationships. This question is very valued by the tourists (Velasco, 2018.)

Melilla has the privilege of having among its inhabitants' people from four different cultures and religions. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism coexist in the same space, in peace, enriching each other. That is what makes Melilla a perfect destination if you have spiritual concerns and would like to approach other ways of understanding the world.

For years it has been promoting a project to make the multiculturalism of the city reach the tourist. The Route of the Temples is a walk through the streets of Melilla with stops at four temples.

In order to carry out this tourist product, the Tourist Board signed a series of collaboration agreements between religious communities in order to reach a point of agreement on the availability of the temples chosen to be visited, without interfering with the worship schedule from each of them. This product is one more incentive for this multiculturalism so appreciated in Melilla as in few places.

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UNESCO: "Melilla has the secret of the peaceful coexistence of the four cultures"

The route is offered only on Sundays and must be booked before Thursday of that week, so it does not facilitate the realization of the visit, taking into account that the average period of hotel stay in the city is 2.4 nights.

The temples visited are four, corresponding to the four predominant religious identities in the city:

Church of the Immaculate Conception By their titles is called Royal and Pontifical Immaculate Concepcion Church. It is the most ancient of Melilla (I.657). Romanesque style has three naves, and it is building on the foundation of which was San Miguel Church.

The Christian community, the most numerous, has among its temples this Romanesque church. It is from the year 1657, which makes it the oldest in the city. Inside, you will find baroque altarpieces and in the High Altar, the image of the Virgen de la Victoria (patron saint of Melilla), and the size of the Christ of the Vera Cruz, of the fifteenth century, worn by the first Christians.

There are also periods when you visit The Archpriestly Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Or Zoruah (Holy Light) Synagogue or Yamin Benarroch Synagogue. Building three floors of the architect Enrique Nieto (1924), highlighting its beautiful frontage, mixing Caliphals and Nazaries elements.

Built by Yamin Benarroch initiative, maecenas and vice-mayor of the city in the 20s, in memory of his father. Most important Synagogue for the Jewish

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community of Melilla. You can appreciate on its facade Caliphate and Nasrid motifs, one of its main attractions.

Zawiya al-Alawiya Mosque. The Zawiya al-Alawiya of Melilla is a center of Sufi (Islamic spirituality) that simultaneously does the function of Mosque for a few years. Founded by Saint Cheikh. Sidi Mohamed Tahar Hach Muhammadi (1883-1946), considered the great liberating and spiritual teacher of the tariqa Al-Alawiya that was transmitted by his master. Cheikh Sidi Shaykh Ahmad ibn Mustafa al-Alawi (1869-1933). This Mosque occupies around 770 square meters and was built by King Alfonso XIII himself. However, this is not the most relevant since the Melilla Central Mosque occupies that position.

Mandir Hindu Temple. This is the only hindu temple in Melilla, wich acts as a meeting place for the comunity. The temple has a beautifull altar used by the community to venerate images and photographs of different holy men and gurus. The Hindu community is the least numerous in Melilla and therefore has only one temple in the city. It is also a meeting point for those who profess this religion. It can be one of the most unexpected and striking spaces because there is not great Hindu tradition in Spain.

3. Aims

In this case study, we want to give answers to the following questions related to tourism policies and strategy of religious tourism in Melilla:

- Is the number of tourists or travelers who take the route of the temples significant?

- What characteristics best define the originality of the tourist product, the route of the temples?

- Are there statistical data that allow an interpretation of the possible demand of this tourist product?

4. Method

This case study analyzes the real possibility of promoting Melilla, a Spanish city located in North Africa, as a tourist destination that offers in its institutional advertising as a multicultural and religious society that without giving up its signs of identity, it is possible to walk surrounded by people with Arab, Christian or Hebrew features and with the typical Berber clothes or with djellaba. [1]

The methodology is based on the case study categories identified by Yin (1984) and McDonough (1997); the methodology will be exploratory, descriptive, and interpretative.

A study will be prior fieldwork, and smallscale data collection will be conducted before the research questions and hypotheses are proposed. The descriptive case studies may be in a narrative form, and it aims to interpret the data by developing conceptual categories, supporting or challenging the assumptions made regarding them.

Explanatory case studies aim to answer 'how' or 'why' questions. Generally, with little control on behalf of the researcher over the occurrence of events. This type of case study focuses on phenomena within the contexts of real-life situations.

A fieldwork will be carried out in two aspects, summarizing the reasons why tourists have decided to visit the route of the temples, collecting the opinions that the research elaborated by Borrell (2018) has been recording according to the interviews carried out during her face-to-face visits.

The author of this case study has also carried out this guided visit to the temples on two occasions. Therefore he also knows to be able to corroborate many of the conclusions that this researcher has set out in the article cited in the references.

As for the analytical calculation, a series of statistical indicators have been used to help obtain interpretations of the objectives proposed in this study.

The leading indicators used in the analytical calculation have been:

- Hotel occupancy survey.

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[1] Tourist brochure published by the Tourist Board of the Autonomous City of Melilla

- Travelers temple route.

- Entry of passengers through the airport and port.

- Distribution of the main reasons for coming to Melilla.

5. Results

First of all, we can highlight the lack of knowledge that visitors have of the other religions, which is born from a common monotheistic trunk are so related to each other.

These cultural and religious groups live together in the city and share all their daily meeting spaces such as public spaces, streets, squares, gardens, markets, schools, among others, except one: the sacred worship space.

The visitors can appreciate it in every corner of any street, but this guided touristic route helps to move from skepticism and hermeticism, positions expressed by tourists.

To the surprise of understanding (Borrell, 2018); especially in aspects related to the cycle of life: birth, rites of passage, weddings, funerals...); or how the understanding of the existence of a multitude of gods that the Hindus have, with the multitude of saints, Christs or virgins that the Catholics have. Alternatively, how the central Muslim religious feast (Eid al Adha or Aid al -Kebir or celebration of sacrifice) where Ibrahim (Muslim) or Abraham (Jewish) as an act of obedience intends to sacrifice his son Ishmael Muslim) or Issac (Jewish Christian) is a Hebrew ceremony.

However, the fundamental objective of this study is to see if it could become a product that is not only innovative but also successful. To this end, we obtain data from the INE hotel occupancy survey, differentiating between Spaniards and foreigners, the number of busy nights, the number of visitors to the route of the temples collected by the Melilla Tourist Board, and the reasons for the trip of those who are not residents.

Table 1 shows that the number of travellers staying in hotel accommodation is significantly lower than the number of people entering via the port and airport annually. This number is since a significant percentage of the people transported are residents who travel to the peninsula on a weekly or monthly basis.

Or the periods of the passage of the strait of citizens resident in Europe, on their way to Morocco. Therefore, there are no data that allow us to relate the total number of people who enter the city (which are not residents and its

purpose is tourism) with the data on hotel occupancy and, in turn with the number of them who decide to take the route of the temples.

Nor can relate the ratio of the number of route of the temples visitors and the travelers staying in hotels. Many of them are staying with relatives. We cannot relate to the people who enter the city with those who are tourists. If we can know that of the non-residents the reasons for their visit to the city: Get to know the city (47%), do business (23%), visiting relatives (20%), get to know Morocco (10%).

Table 1. Hotel occupancy, Visitors Temples Route, Passengers and ratios

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	%15/11
Hotel occupancy number						
Total travelers	3,656	3,904	4,284	4,073	4,251	16%
Spanish residents	2,746	2,892	3,190	3,116	3,092	13%
Foreign residents	910	1,012	1,094	957	1,159	27%
Total overnight stays	9,148	9,007	10,066	12,079	11,276	23%
Spanish residents	7,678	7,464	8,470	10,831	9,377	22%
Foreign residents	1,470	1,543	1,596	1,248	1,899	29%
Visitors of the Temple Route						
Total temples routes	785	505	871	485	782	-0.4%
Spanish residents	727	482	807	443	727	0%
Foreign residents	58	23	64	42	55	-5,2%
Passengers entrance						
Passengers airport	143,000	157,925	144,776	159,765	158,903	11%
Passengers port	321,000	405,442	391,798	386,067	422,130	32%
Total	464,000	563,367	536,573	545,832	581,033	25%
Reasons to make the trip						
Get to know the city	218,080	264,782	252,189	256,541	273,086	
Do business	106,720	129,574	123,412	125,541	133,638	
Visiting relatives	92,800	112,673	107,315	109,166	116,207	
Get to know Morocco	46,400	56,337	53,657	54,583	58,103	
Ratios						
% Travelers route/ travelers	21%	13%	20%	12%	18%	
% spend the night in a hotel	2%	1.6%	1.9%	2.2%	1.6%	
% Entries/ visitors temple routes	0,2%	0,1%	0,2%	0.1%	0.1%	

Sources: INE (hotel occupancy survey), Borrell, 2018, Melilla Tourist Board. AENA, Ports of Spain and Melilla Tourism Observatory.

However, even so we can say that the number of visitors of the route of the temples does not grow. Therefore does not meet the task of trying to boost the increase of tourists in the city despite the promotion and effort that the city is making.

It is difficult to make a measurement, as has been said, but would not reach 1 of every 100 non-resident visitors that would visit the temples.

6. Discussion

EU Policy on Quality in Tourism (2030) is closely linked to its sustainability: the responsible use of natural resources, the protection of heritage and preservation of the natural and cultural integrity of destinations, and the quality and sustainability of jobs created.

In an increasingly globalised world, travelers want increasingly to roam around the world to participate in cultural and sports, demand for personalised deluxe experiences available with smaller budgets, accommodation opportunities in all sorts of establishments ranging, seeking more cultural immersion into the destination which integrates sustainability and expecting tourism industry demonstrates commitment to the natural environment.

In this line of innovation is the development of the option of promoting religious tourism in Melilla. The tourist activity directed to the knowledge of the four religions that more devotes has the city is the reason why the Tourist Board of the Autonomous City of Melilla has organized this activity since 2008. It is a tour of four of the most identifiable temples of the religions that there are: Church, Mosque, Hindu Temple, and Synagogue.

Melilla has many religious temples of these cultures, but they are alive, that is, they are temples where people go daily and where religious experiences are lived.

Not only do these universal spaces have the capacity to open up to other cultures and encourage dialogue and relations between human beings, but the agreements reached between the Autonomous City and religious organisations do a significant job, patrimonial wise, in preserving and maintaining these sacred centres.

This supposed competitive advantage of having temples lived daily and which influence the rest of the cultural identities resident in the city that enrich them, will be possible to make it known to potential tourists seeking cultural tourism activities.

7. Conclusions and Recommendation

Melilla has a little known cultural tourism product and possibly, with an excellent potential for development, which is to be able to know and live the reality of religious temples that are alive.

The tourist authorities recommend that in the coming years, an effort be made to promote innovative policies that encourage sustainability and the strengthening of cultural and quality tourism. In this line is the product offered by the route of the temples within the so-called religious tourism.

However, the number of visitors in the years analysed seems insignificant, and it is not definite that their number is not increasing.

These may be due to the difficulties caused by the high prices of transport and the negative image that the city projects due to the high information that there is in the media of being a problematic place of the south-north passage of migration and its famous protective and separating fence between Africa and Europe.

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