Spiritual or Tourist Experience? A Critical Exploration of the Consequences of the Commodification of the Hajj on the Pilgrim Experience.

By

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Abstract

Within the field of religious tourism research, increasing attention has been paid to commodification and its consequences. However, there remains a paucity of literature that considers the impacts of the commodification of religious tourism on the experience of religious tourists or pilgrims in general, whilst few if any attempts had been made to consider this issue from an Islamic perspective. Specifically, little is known about the consequences of the commodification of the destination (Mecca) and of the religious ritual of the Hajj on pilgrims' spiritual experiences.

Therefore, based upon research into the Hajj, Mecca and pilgrims' experiences, this thesis sought to address the following question: to what extent is commodification transforming the spiritual experiences of pilgrim on the Hajj, as well as their perceptions of the authenticity and appeal of the pilgrimage journey. Putting it another way, the main aim of this exploratory research was to critically appraise the extent to which the spiritual experience of the Islamic pilgrim is being transformed into a touristic experience as a result of the contemporary commodification of Mecca and the Hajj.

The research in this thesis adopted a phenomenological interpretivist approach, and comprised two stages. Stage one of the research involved one focus group undertaken in the UK with pilgrims who had undertaken the Hajj at least once in the preceding three years, the purpose to being to establish the extent and perceived consequences of the commodification of the Hajj as a basis for guiding and informing the principal research at stage two. The focus group outcomes revealed that, for the majority of participants, the Hajj has become commodified. Not only has the experience become more 'touristic', but the participants revealed that pilgrims also seek out greater comfort and luxury, thus indicating that the pilgrimage has become more of a 'branded', commodified experience. As such, the focus group findings confirm the arguments in the literature with regards to the commodification of religious tourism yet, for some participants in the research, this commodification had not, for them, diminished either the authenticity or the enjoyment of the experience.

Subsequently, the second stage of data collection took place during the Hajj; specifically, the researcher participated in the Hajj as a pilgrim in August-September 2016. At this stage, the principal data collection method was semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted with pilgrims from both developed and developing countries in order to explore in depth not only how pilgrims experience a commodified Hajj but also to identify the extent to which these experiences vary amongst pilgrims from contrasting cultural backgrounds. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia / Mecca,

specifically hoteliers, in order to elicit further data with regards to religious tourism policy and practice, as well as contributing to an understanding of the commodification process from a supply perspective. Interview data were also supplemented by participant observation of the roles and actions of pilgrims during the Hajj.

The research revealed that the identified commodification of Mecca and the Hajj is impacting negatively not only on the spiritual experience of pilgrims but also on the perceived authenticity of the destination. More specifically, a consensus emerged from the data that, irrespective of national or cultural background, the pilgrim's behaviour is becoming more materialistic and consumption-oriented. In particular, influenced by the increasing supply of contemporary, highly-branded hospitality services, modern tourism infrastructure and SMART technology in Mecca, the pilgrim's spiritual experience is being transformed into one mainly more touristic, an experience which competes with and potentially challenges the moralities of the Islamic religious journey of the Hajj and its lessons based on simplicity, equality and no ostentation.

Overall, this thesis concludes that, at least for the participants in both stages of the research, the Hajj has become commodified. As a consequence, their spiritual experience is becoming diluted, entering the realm of a more touristic experience. Pilgrims seek out greater comfort and luxury, indicating that the pilgrimage has become more of a 'branded', commodified experience.

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Abbreviations

UNWTO	-	United Nation World Tourism Organisation
WTO	-	World Trade Organization
KSA	-	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
ARC	-	Alliance of Religions and Conservations
WTTC	-	World Travel &Tourism Council
FG	-	Focus Group
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
WCC	-	World Council of Churches
PBUH	-	Peace Be Upon Him
AD	-	Anno Domini
R	-	Respondent
TV	-	Television

Preface

I have undertaken this study as both an academic and as a Muslim. Putting it another way, this thesis is an academic investigation into a specific form of religious tourism – the Hajj to Mecca – but a form of tourism principally nevertheless of utmost significance to me as a Muslim. Indeed, prior to commencing this study, I had undertaken the Hajj on two previous occasions, but as a pilgrim. It was this experience that initially stimulated this research because, on each previous visit to Mecca, I felt that there was something missing from the divine environment of the holy city, something that was not easily identifiable although, on both occasions, I experienced a sense of contemporary commodification, of the modernisation and commercialisation of Mecca and the Hajj, that intruded on my true contentment of worship.

In this study, there is no conflict between my academic objectives and my personal religious beliefs. To be specific, I have attempted as far as possible to adopt an objective perspective, to distance myself and my personal beliefs and convictions from the research. That is to say, this is not an auto-ethnography, and nor does it intend to be. Nevertheless, I am inevitably part of this thesis; as a Muslim I am part of this research and this research is part of me and, in a sense, what follows is a part of my Islamic journey.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background: from pilgrimage to contemporary tourism

Tourism is frequently referred to as a major feature of the modern era. Defined as 'a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business / professional purposes' (UNWTO, 2014a), there can be no doubting its significance. Indeed, since the mid-twentieth century, international tourism has evolved into an activity participated in by ever increasing numbers of people, whose spending on a diverse array of products and services contributes to what has become one of the world's largest economic sectors (Telfer & Sharpley, 2016: 2). The scale and value of international tourism is revealed in Table 1.1. As can be seen, since 1950, the year in

Table 1.1: International tourist arrivals and receipts, 1950-2016

Year	Arrivals (million)	Receipts (US$bn)	Year	Arrivals (million)	Receipts (US$bn)
1950	25.3	2.1	2000	687.0	481.6
1960	69.3	6.9	2001	686.7	469.9
1965	112.9	11.6	2002	707.0	488.2
1970	165.8	17.9	2003	694.6	534.6
1975	222.3	40.7	2004	765.1	634.7
1980	278.1	104.4	2005	806.6	682.7
1985	320.1	119.1	2006	847.0	742.0
1990	439.5	270.2	2007	903.0	856.0
1991	442.5	283.4	2008	917.0	930.0
1992	479.8	326.6	2009	882.0	851.0
1993	495.7	332.6	2010	940.0	927.0
1994	519.8	362.1	2011	995.0	1,042.0
1995	540.6	410.7	2012	1,035.0	1,075.0
1996	575.0	446.0	2013	1,087.0	1,159.0
1997	598.6	450.4	2014	1,133.0	1,252.0
1998	616.7	451.4	2015	1,184.0	1,196.0
1999	639.6	464.5	2016	1,235.0	1,220.0

Source: Telfer & Sharpley (2016: 29); UNWTO data)

which comprehensive data on international tourism were first collated and published, international arrivals – or more precisely, the number of cross-border movements – have increased consistently. The rate of growth has, inevitably, decreased over the decades (see Table 1.2); between 1950-60 and 1990-2000, average growth rates declined from 10.6% to 4.8%. Nevertheless, despite a variety of factors that have

Table 1.2: International tourism arrivals and receipts growth rates, 1950-2000

Decade	Arrivals (Average annual increase %)	Receipts (Average annual increase %)
1950-1960	10.6	12.6
1960-1970	9.1	10.1
1970-1980	5.6	19.4
1980-1990	4.8	9.8
1990-2000	4.2	6.5

Source: adapted from WTO (2005)

impacted negatively on arrivals since the new millennium, not least '9/11' in 2001, the Asian tsunami in 2004 and the global economic crisis of 2008, international tourism has proved to be highly resilient, achieving 3.4% average annual growth between 2005 and 2010 and, more recently, 3.9% average annual growth between 2010 and 2015 (UNWTO, 2016). It is not surprising, then, that continuing growth in international tourism is predicted. For example, the World Tourism Organisation has long suggested that, by 2020, international arrivals will total 1.6 billion, generating $2 trillion in international receipts (WTO 1998), although it is likely that these figures will prove to be optimistic. At the same time, it is also important to recognise that global tourism activity includes domestic tourism, or people travelling in their own countries (Ghimire, 2001), which is considered to be some six times greater than that of international tourism (UNWTO, 2016). Consequently, tourism has long been described as the 'largest peaceful movement of people across cultural boundaries in the history of the world' (Lett, 1989: 227).

Two points immediately deserve emphasis. First, the overall figures do not reveal the scope and diversity of tourism. As participation in tourism (both international and domestic) continues to grow, where tourists come from, where they travel to and what they do is becoming increasingly diverse. More specifically, tourism embraces a variety of purposes and activities beyond the common perception of it as a form of leisure or recreation (Urry, 2002), as recognised in the definitions of tourists proposed by the World Tourism Organisation for the purpose of data compilation (Table 1.3). Not only does tourism include both leisure / holiday and business travel, but also a number of intermediate, purposeful forms of travel, such as education, health and, of particular relevance to this thesis, religious travel, are included in official tourism statistics.

And second, although tourism or, more precisely, tourism on a mass scale (Harrison & Sharpley, 2017) has its roots in the socio-economic and technological transformations of the mid-nineteenth century and, thus, can be considered an essentially modern phenomenon (Sigaux, 1966; Towner, 1996; Walton, 2005), tourism in one form or

Table 1.3: Definitions of tourists

To be included in tourism statistics		Not to be included in tourism statistics
Category	*Purpose*	*Category*
Tourists:	holidays	Border workers
non-residents	business	Transit passengers
nationals resident	health	Nomads
abroad	study	Refugees
crew members	meetings/missions	Members of armed forces
	VFR	Diplomats
Excursionists:	religion	Temporary immigrants
cruise passengers	sport	Permanent immigrants
day visitors	others	
crews		

Source: adapted from WTO (1994)

another has a much longer history, although the actual term 'tourism' did not appear in the English language until the late eighteenth century. In 1800, for example, Samuel Pegge observed that 'a Traveller is now-a-days called a Tour-ist' (cited in Buzard, 1993: 1). People have travelled for as long as they have had the means to do so and, hence, 'like many other modern industries, tourism can trace its ancestry back to the Old Testament' (Young, 1973: 9). There is much evidence of travel in ancient times (Casson, 1974) whilst, according to Sigaux (1966), the Romans enjoyed a form of resort-based tourism not dissimilar to today's. Most early travel, however, was undertaken for the purposes of trade or government business, although one notable form of 'voluntary' travel was that for religious purposes, specifically pilgrimage.

'In its purest form pilgrimage was a voluntary journey to worship at some holy shrine, and the journey itself was expected to be hard and fraught with difficulties, a form of penance' (Jebb, 1986: 3; also Turner & Turner, 2011). As early as the third century AD, Bethlehem was frequented by Christian visitors (Sigaux,1996: 18) and, hence, pilgrimage or, more generally, religious tourism, or tourism 'whose participants are motivated either in part or exclusively for religious reasons' (Rinschede,1992), is seen by many as the earliest manifestation of tourism on a relatively large scale (Kaelber, 2006; Raj & Griffen, 2015). Indeed, during the medieval period, pilgrimage was a widespread social institution (Digence, 2006) practiced within the world's principal religious traditions of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

For example, the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, fundamental to Islam, has in fact been practiced for more than 25 centuries, the people of Arabia having undertaken such a journey (though not, of course, guided by the Abrahamic teachings which are currently

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followed) prior to the emergence of Islam. According to the Sharia lunar calendar, the Hajj typically occurs between the eighth and twelfth days of the Islamic month *Dhu'l-Hijjah*, although the last three months of Islamic lunar calendar, namely, *Shawwal, Du al-Qada* and *Du al-Hijjah*, are also considered as the months of Hajj. The Quran does not state precisely in which month the Hajj should take place, although currently it is usually during *Dhu'l-Hijja* (Galwash, 1973: 15; also Azraqi & Afakka, 1965, cited in AlKen, 1995). Following God's instructions, Ibrahim (PBUH) is said to have built a monument in Mecca at the site of a spring known as the Kaaba, and worshipers from all faiths traveled to revel at the site. In 630 A.D., however, the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) led a group of Muslims there in the first official Hajj, destroying the idols placed there by polytheistic worshipers and re-dedicating the site in the name of Allah (God).

The Hajj is famous not only for its scope but also its scale (Sharpley, 2009). In 1950, a total of 250,000 pilgrims undertook the Hajj (Ahlan Wasahian, 1987). Since then, however, the number of pilgrims participating in it has risen dramatically; in 2012, 3.16 million pilgrims were recorded at the Hajj, falling slightly to 2.95 million in 2015, (Mintel, 2016). Moreover, more than twelve million pilgrims visit the holy cities of Mecca and Madinah each year (Arab News, 2013). These numbers are expected to increase to 17 million by 2025 (Wainwright, 2015). More generally, international religious tourism to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) increased by more than 2% annually between 2006 and 2010; just in 2010, almost 4.9 million international religious pilgrims travelled to KSA, representing 17.1% of worldwide religious tourist arrivals (Jafari & Scott, 2010).

Significantly, religious tourism, as well other forms of tourism that are spiritually motivated, has not only remained an identifiable form of tourism, but has also evolved into a major sector of the international tourism market (McKelvie, 2005), whilst pilgrimage in particular has increased in popularity. For example, Olsen and Timothy (2006) suggest that more than 240 million people annually participate in pilgrimages, whilst ARC (2014) put the figure at 200 million. More broadly, the World Tourism Organisation claims that '300 to 330 million tourists visit the world´s key religious sites every year' (UNWTO, 2014b) although, as Mintel (2012) point out, this includes domestic religious tourism. Hence, the international religious tourism market in 2010 was considered to total a much more conservative 28.5 million trips (Mintel, 2012).

In reality, difficulties in estimating accurately the number of participants in religious tourism / pilgrimage, not least reflecting definitional issues (for example, and as considered in Chapter Two of this thesis, tourists visiting religious sites or, indeed, walking a pilgrimage route, may not necessarily be 'religious tourists'), suggest that

accurate figures would be difficult, if not impossible, to compile. Nevertheless, there can be no doubting the scale of religious tourism, while Mintel (2012) value it in terms of expenditure at US$19 billion annually.

The growth in religious tourism and pilgrimage reflects, in part, the increased accessibility of religious sites as well as greater opportunities for people to engage in religiously motivated travel (Sharpley, 2009); the continuing growth in tourism in general, referred to above, is inevitably manifested in growth in distinctive forms of tourism, such as religious tourism, in particular. At the same time, however, given its economic potential, governments and tourist agencies around world have long actively promoted religious tourism for its contribution to income, foreign exchange earnings and employment (Vukonić, 2002). More specifically, as Sizer (1999) observes, religious journeys have been big business for many years, particularly at those holy destinations where local communities have been able to extract maximum economic advantage from large numbers of visitors. More simply stated, for those destinations that are home to sites or events of religious or spiritual significance, religious tourism represents a growth market to be exploited for its potential contribution to economic and social development.

The same is true, of course, of tourism more generally. As a major global economic force now estimated to be worth some US$7.2 trillion, representing 9.8% of global GDP (WTTC, 2016), tourism is regarded at the global, national and local levels as an effective means of achieving economic and social development or regeneration. In countries around the world, tourism has become 'an important and integral element of their development strategies' (Jenkins, 1991: 61) whilst the World Tourism Organisation has long officially sanctioned tourism's developmental role:

> World tourism can contribute to the establishment of a new international economic order that will help to eliminate the widening economic gap between developed and developing countries and ensure the steady acceleration of economic and social development and progress, in particular in developing countries (WTO, 1980: 1).

The extent to which such development occurs, and the challenges (and potential solutions) to achieving tourism-related development are widely considered in the literature (for example, see Hall & Richards, 2000; Holden, 2013; Scheyvens, 2002; Sharpley & Telfer, 2015; Telfer & Sharpley, 2016). A full discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the important point is that the continuing growth

in tourism is driven by factors related to both demand and supply. From the demand perspective, the emergence and growth of tourism, both domestic and international, as a modern, mass phenomenon, has long been facilitated by three things: increases in wealth and disposable income, increases in free time, and technological advances in transport, communication, financial services and so on (see for example, Cooper et al., 2008). In terms of supply, it has been the development of a dynamic and sophisticated tourism 'industry' or sector, comprising the different elements of the tourism 'product', including transport, accommodation, food and beverages, and entertainment and attractions, often combined by tour operators into a 'package holiday', that has met the needs of tourists (Holloway & Humphreys, 2012). In a similar vein, while the opportunity to participate in tourism has become increasingly widespread or, as Urry (2002) puts it, democratised, the growth in tourism has at the same time been dependent on the provision of an increasingly diverse set of products and services that collectively comprise the tourist experience – specifically, it has been dependent on the commodification of tourist experiences.

1.2 Tourism, commodification and (in) authenticity

It has long been argued that tourism, as a fundamentally economic activity (most tourists purchase a set of products and services that are designed and produced for tourism consumption) is an agent of commodification or, as it is sometimes referred to in the tourism literature, commoditisation (Cohen, 1988). The distinction between the two terms is considered later in this thesis *(*see Chapter Three*)* but, simply stated, commodification is the process through which anything – a product, a service, a cultural event or performance, people or even ideas – is transformed into a commodity by being assigned an exchange value (see Appadurai, 1986). Within the specific context of tourism, therefore, any element of the tourist experience, whether a meal, a night in hotel or a cultural performance that has 'come to be performed or produced for touristic consumption' (Cohen, 1988: 372) becomes a commodity, or simply something sold to tourists.

It is not commodification itself but its consequences that have long been of interest to tourism researchers, particularly the extent which it impacts upon the authenticity of destination cultures and cultural artefacts and events. Stated alternatively, to meet the needs of tourists seeking cultural experiences and products, local culture must be 'available and presentable, packaged for consumption into easily digestible and, preferably, photogenic chunks' (Simpson, 1993: 166). As a consequence, local culture may be 'altered and often destroyed by the treatment of it as a tourist attraction (Greenwood, 1989: 173); traditional rituals become, for both performer and audience,

meaningless, shallow events, while traditional artefacts become mass-produced 'airport art'. At the same time, however, the commodification of tourism may impact negatively on the tourists themselves, reducing the authenticity of their experiences. For Daniel Boorstin, this does not matter; the modern tourist:

> has come to believe that he can have a lifetime of adventure in two weeks and all the thrills of risking his [sic] life without any real risk at all. He expects that the exotic and the familiar can be made to order… expecting all this, he demands that it be supplied to him (Boorstin, 1964: 80).

Conversely, MacCannell (1989) argues that tourists are modern pilgrims, not in a religious sense but, rather, seeking reality, meaning and authenticity in other places and other cultures. However, the commodification of tourism, manifested in what he refers to as staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973; 1989), dooms the tourist to failure in the quest for authenticity.

The arguments of Boorstin and MacCannell represent opposing positions in debates surrounding the authenticity of tourist experiences, a concept which, as discussed in Chapter Three, continues to attract academic attention. The point is, however, that tourism and commodification to a great extent go hand in hand; as destinations seek to build their tourist sector, to attract more tourists and, importantly, more tourist spending as a basis for wider economic development, they invest in more products and services.

And this is certainly the case in the context of religious tourism. Specifically, reference has already been made above to the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca that has become increasingly popular and, by implication, of increasing importance to the economy of Saudi Arabia. It is, perhaps, unsurprising then that in recent years, the country has been investing heavily in tourism facilities and services, particularly in Mecca. For example, Mecca's development authority approved a 23-year long master plan of the holy city, resulting in:

- the KSA investing US$ 80 billion in major tourism and hospitality projects
- an additional 343,000 branded luxury hotel rooms to be completed by the end of 2016-18 and, in the following five years, 12,700 international branded four-star hotel rooms to be added
- increasing occupancy rates of star-rated hotels in Mecca from 36.4% in 2001 to 55% in 2008. The average room rate in Mecca more than doubled to between $320 and $400 in 2008 from $159.90 in 2001. Revenue per available room in Mecca improved by 32.7% in the first quarter of 2009

- in 2012, 3.16 million pilgrims participated in the Hajj, with US$16 billion revenue earned by KSA

What is surprising, however, is little if any academic attention has been paid to exploring the consequences of this commodification on the religious or spiritual experience of participants in the Hajj (Henderson, 2011). To be specific, a gap in the literature exists with regards to the extent to which the religiously-motivated experience of pilgrims on the Hajj is becoming diluted or, simply put, the extent to which it is being transformed from an authentic religious/ spiritual experience into an inauthentic touristic experience. The overall purpose of this thesis then is to address this gap, in so doing contributing to knowledge and understanding of the contemporary Hajj experience in particular and of the interplay between religious tourism / pilgrimage, commodification and the nature of the religious tourist experience more generally.

1.3: Aims and objectives of the research

As discussed above, not only is religious tourism in general, and pilgrimage in particular, one of the earliest recognised forms of tourism, but it has evolved into a major sector of the international tourism market. Unsurprisingly, therefore, major religious tourism destinations have long recognised the economic potential of the religious tourism market and have taken steps to enhance its contribute to the local economy (Vukonić, 2002). This is certainly the case in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where religious tourism, including the annual Hajj to Mecca, currently generates some US$16billion in revenue (Dawan, 2012). In order to further develop and exploit this market, significant investments have been made in tourism infrastructure in Mecca, in particular in modernising, upgrading and extending the accommodation and other services available to pilgrims. What is not understood, however, are the potential and actual consequences of this commodification of the Hajj on the nature of the pilgrims' (authentic) experience of the Hajj. The aim of this research, therefore, is as follows:

> *To critically appraise the extent to which the spiritual experience of Islamic pilgrim is being transformed into a touristic experience as a result of the contemporary commodification of the pilgrimage.*

More specifically, it seeks to identify, within an appreciation of the traditional role and significance of Mecca and the Hajj in Islam, how pilgrims / religious tourists to Mecca perceive and respond to the contemporary commodification of the holy city and the Hajj, how this impacts upon their religious experience, and whether different groups of

pilgrims respond to this commodification in different ways. Hence, this research has the following objectives:

i. To consider the significance of holy city of Mecca and the spiritual ritual of Hajj.
ii. To assess critically the contemporary commodification of Hajj and the holy destination of Mecca.
iii. To evaluate how pilgrims perceive the role of contemporary tourism commodities in Mecca, such as the modern hospitality and tourism infrastructure and technology.
iv. To appraise critically whether such materialistic commodification transforms the pilgrim's spiritual experience into a touristic experience.
v. To identify the extent to which pilgrims' experiences are influenced by their different cultural backgrounds.
vi. To explore whether luxury religious tourism commodification contributes to the emergence of distinctive segments within the pilgrimage market.

1.4. Statement of contribution

Significant academic attention has been paid to the phenomenon of religious and spiritual tourism from both a Western and Eastern (religious/ spiritual) perspective, typically with a focus on its historical development, its economic dimension, the characteristics and behaviours of different types of religious / spiritual tourists and the impacts of religious tourism at sacred destinations, shrines and sanctuaries. In contrast, however, the potential spiritual and touristic experience element of contemporary religious tourism has attracted much less attention, in particular the extent to which the nature of and transformations in the religious destination may influence the religious tourist's experience. Indeed, to date this is the first study to address specifically the connection between the process of commodification, the perceived authenticity of the religious destination and the subsequent spiritual experience. Moreover, it is the first study to explore this relationship in the context of Mecca and the Hajj.

1.5 Methodological approach

As discussed above, the purpose of this study is to explore critically how the commodification of Mecca as a religious destination and of the ritual of Hajj is transforming the pilgrimage from a spiritual into a more touristic experience. In order to meet this objective, a qualitative exploratory research strategy has been adopted. More specifically, given that the principal focus of the study is on the roles, actions and perceptions of pilgrims, qualitative research methods facilitate the collection of deeper, nuanced data with respect to the motivations, perceptions and behaviours of pilgrims within the wider social and cultural context of the Hajj (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004).

In this research, the data was collected in two stages. At the first stage, one focus group was conducted in the UK with pilgrims who had performed Hajj within the last three years (see Appendix 1). The use of focus group facilitated open-ended discussions on a specific topic, in this case, the commodification of the Hajj – as well as potentially identifying new areas of discussion relevant to the research. As such, the focus group provided essential foundational data to be built upon and explored in more detail at Stage Two.

The second stage of data collection took place during the researcher's actual participation in the Hajj; specifically, the researcher joined the Hajj as a pilgrim in August-September 2016. At this stage, the principal data collection method was semi-structured in-depth interviews (see Appendix 2); as Saunders (2003) argues, semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with flexibility in the interview process, allowing the sequence of questions to be varied and emergent issues to be followed and discussed. The semi-structured interviews explore critically the extent to which the (from both the developing and developed the world) experience from one mainly spiritual to one more touristic. The findings were then analysed using themes to identify patterns, relationships and meaningful insights. In an effort to ensure accuracy a process of manual interpretation using narrative analysis was carried out, adding validity and rigour to the process by cross referencing the principle findings from the two analysis methods (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003, cited in Ritchie & Lewis, 2004).

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 1

The purpose of this chapter has been to introduce the thesis, justifying the aim and focus of the research and highlighting its potential contribution to knowledge. Specifically, it has positioned the investigation within the contexts of religious tourism, commodification and the religious / spiritual experience, whilst locating religious tourism within the broader context of tourism more generally. The specific aims and objectives of the research have established, as has the methodology adopted in the research. The gap in the literature that this study addresses has also been identified.

Chapter 2

Given the overall purpose of the thesis as set out in Chapter One, Chapter Two establishes the conceptual framework for the research through a review of the religious / spiritual tourism literature. Specifically, it considers definition of religious tourism, its history, and the scope, scale and different forms of religious tourism, as well as discussing different religious tourism places and their meaning of spirituality.

Chapter 3

Following the review of religious / spiritual tourism in Chapter Two, Chapter Three reviews more specifically the relationship between religion, commodification, tourism, authenticity and the spiritual experience. In so doing, it both provided the conceptual underpinning and informs the subsequent primary research.

Chapter 4

This chapter provides an overview of Islam in general and of the ritual of Hajj in particular, including a brief history from the pre-Mohammad (PBUH) to post-Mohammad (PBUH) era. It goes on to identify and explain how the city of Mecca is becoming a commodified religious tourism destination, evaluating this process from an economic development perspective.

Chapter 5

This chapter considers the research design and methodology, demonstrating how they were used to address the research problem and meet the research aims. Focus groups are used in the initial phase of the research to identify key themes and concepts. This is followed in the second phase by semi-structured interviews to explore in greater

depth, participant understanding of the commodification and its impact on the spiritual experience.

Chapter 6

This chapter considers the findings of this study and discusses, through analysis, the results. This chapter starts with a review of the research question moving on to an exploration of the principal themes emerging form the first phase of the research, the focus groups. Using the focus group information as a backdrop, the second phase unstructured interviews are analysed and interpreted. Finally, the evidence from the data is summed up in a brief analysis.

Chapter 7
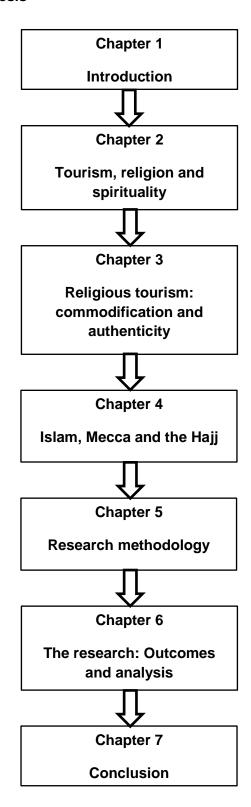
This chapter presents the conclusion of this research based upon interpretations of the research participants' understanding of spiritual experience, in particular considering the extent of the commodified touristic experience amongst pilgrims. The spiritual dimension of the Islamic pilgrim/tourist is then conceptualised within the context of the tri-partite relationship of commodification meaning, Mecca as holy destination and Hajj principles. Future research is assessed, the vacuum in literature that this research fills is re-examined and a self-reflective report brings this thesis to a conclusion.
The thesis structure is presented diagrammatically below (see page 14).

1.7 Summary

Overall, the purpose of this chapter has been to introduce the thesis, justifying the aim and focus of the research and highlighting its potential contribution to knowledge. Given the aims and objective of this thesis, it is first clearly necessary to locate the empirical research within a framework of current knowledge and understanding of tourism, religion and spirituality. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Structure of the thesis

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Chapter Two

Tourism, Religion and Spirituality

2.1 Introduction
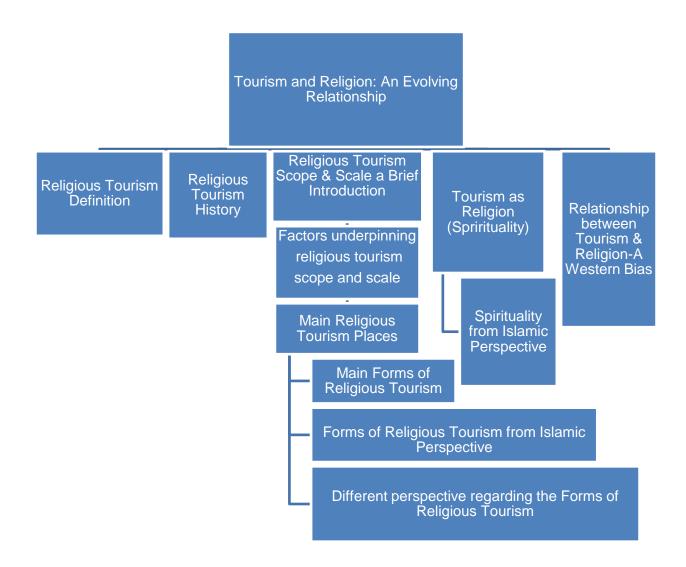
As introduced in the preceding chapter, the overall purpose of this thesis is to explore critically the commodification of religious tourism. More specifically, it seeks to identify the extent to which the Hajj, as a particular manifestation of religious tourism, is becoming commodified, and to consider the potential consequences for those participating. In short, this thesis seeks to establish the extent to which the Hajj has become a commodified tourist experience.

Given the focus of this thesis, it is first necessary to consider critically its broader conceptual framework, namely, the relationship between tourism and religion within the broader theme of spirituality. This is the purpose of this chapter. It commences with an overview of the evolving relationship between tourism and religion before going on to define religious tourism, exploring its history and contemporary scope and scale. Specific forms of religious tourism, including pilgrimage, are then considered, and the chapter then turns to anthropological interpretations of tourism as a contemporary (secular) form of spiritual experience. Finally, it identifies the predominantly Western focus of much of the extant religious tourism research, further emphasising the need for studies of the phenomenon within non-Western religious contexts. Figure 2.1 summarises the chapter's structure and content.

2.2 Tourism and religion: An evolving relationship

The relationship between religion and tourism has recently emerged as a significant field of study although it can, in effect, be traced to the birth of the world's major religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). Indeed, travel for religious motives has existed for many centuries. However, pilgrimage during the medieval era is frequently considered to be not only the earliest documented form of religious travel, but also the forerunner of contemporary mass tourism (Digance, 2006).

Figure 2.1: Chapter 2 Structure and Content

Nevertheless, the roots of the relationship between tourism and religion can be found in the holy books of mainstream religions, such as Judaism, Islam and Christianity. For example, a reading of the holy Qur'an reveals that Islam encourages tourism, the word 'Siyaha' (literally, tourism), derived from the word 'Yasih' (literally, 'to travel, journey, rove and roam about') appearing in the holy Qur'an (Sanad, Kassem & Scott, 2010: 21). Islam encourages tourism for beneficial purposes (the Higher and Lesser Pilgrimages, respectively); remedy, education, business, trade, entertainment and fun and interest, although the latter are to be understood in the context of Islamic Shari'a law (Sanad, Kassem & Scott, 2010: 22).

Similarly, the Bible contains many references to travel: leaving oneself behind, 'walking the walk', and journeys of the soul (Andriotis, 2008: 66-67) whilst, interestingly, Sousa (1988) proposes that the acts of travel described in the Old and New Testaments, whether it is Jesus travelling in the land of Israel or the travels of the Jewish people to discover their God, should be approached as a form of tourism. More generally, the development of religions and tourism have long been linked (York, 2001), with religion influencing the emergence of tourism in a number of ways. For instance, the city of Rome has long been an important (religious) tourism destination whilst Italy more generally has since ancient times attracted large numbers tourists and pilgrims (and gained commensurate economic benefits). Notable Christian tourist/ pilgrim religious sites in Italy include: Venezia (Venice), Padova (Padua), Torino (Turin), Firenze (Florence), Assisi, Roma (Rome) and Montecassino (Italian National Tourist Board North America, 2013).

From its early beginnings, the relationship between tourism and religion has strengthened, with the concept of religious tourism becoming increasingly evident (Timothy, 2006: 7). Indeed, religion and tourism can be considered to be in harmony in as much as an upsurge in religious activities can lead to a parallel increase in religious tourism. This applies to both domestic and international tourism although, for some destinations, it is the international market that is the most significant. For instance, in 2016, a total of 1,862,909 pilgrims participated in the Hajj; of these, just 170,492, or less than 2%, were domestic Saudi pilgrims, (General Authority of Statics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). However, at other religious sites and events around the world the opposite may be the case, with domestic pilgrims outnumbering those from overseas. Although data for global religious tourism are not regularly collated, Table 2.1 provides the number of international religious tourism trips to major destinations in 2010, yet this does not reveal the overall scale of the global religious tourism market. For example, the UN World Tourism Organisation estimates that, including domestic visits, '300 to

330 million tourists visit the world's key religious sites every year' (UNWTO, 2014), yet this is likely to be a conservative estimate. However, as noted later, given the ambiguity of what constitutes religious tourism, accurate figures of participation in the phenomenon are unlikely to be forthcoming.

Table 2.1: International Religious Tourism Trips – 2010

Country	Tourist	Share (%)
Saudi Arabia	4,867,387	17.1
France	4,608,000	16.2
Italy	4,360,000	15.3
Spain	2,634,000	9.3
Mexico	2,240,000	7.9
Israel & Palestine	1,207,500	4.2
Portugal	1,200,000	4.2
United Kingdom	843,900	3.0
Ireland	800,000	2.8
Rest of the world	5,700,000	20.0
Total	28,460,787	100.0

Source: Mintel (2012)

As already suggested, a causal relationship arguably exists between religion and tourism; predominantly, the expansion of tourism in general has been partially dependent on religion in particular (Vukonić, 1996: 17-19). Therefore, much of the study of religious tourism has been from a theological perspective (Turner, 2010).

Nevertheless, from a theological perspective the evolving relationship between tourism and religion is potentially controversial, as most religions consider tourism to be a secular activity and, hence, 'of little relevance to religion' (Cohen, 1998: 242). Certainly, theological considerations of the relationship between tourism and religion are more limited in comparison to other perspectives; tourism is but one of the various phenomena that define contemporary life, whilst the most relevant theological concepts are travelling, learning and peace (WCC, 2005). Thus, although 'Roman Catholicism does not repudiate the phenomenon of relationship of tourism and religion', Islam and Buddhism do not accept fully the combination of profane and religious motives in travelling' (Vukonic, 1996: 243) and, hence, implicitly deny the concept of any relationship of tourism and religion. Generally, therefore, 'the world religions find it … hard to formulate a principled theological position to the phenomenon [of tourism]' (Cohen, 1998: 8).

However, an evolving relationship between religion and tourism is evident in the literature in which a number themes are increasingly considered, including: the potential economic benefits of religious tourism (Jackowski & Smith, 1992; Gupta, 1999; Vukonic, 2002); the management of religious tourism exploring, in particular, physical, cultural and educational issues (Shackley, 2001); the development and promotion of religious sites to boost tourism (Swatos & Tomasi, 2002); and, the patterns, activities and traits of religious tourists / pilgrim at religious locations (Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2000; Rinschede, 1992). Moreover, Shackley (2002: 355) demonstrates how the parameters of the concept of religious tourism are broadening, suggesting that the prison on Robben Island that housed Nelson Mandela for almost 20 years can be seen as 'a sacred site and a shrine to a living man' and, hence, that tourism to Robben Island is a form of pilgrimage. Indeed, arguably the most frequently considered theme is the relationship between tourism and pilgrimage (Cohen, 1992a, 1992b, 1998; Din, 1989; Fleischer, 2000; Joseph & Kavoori, 2001; Rinschede, 1992; Smith, 1992; Turner, 1973). Equally, and of particular relevance to this thesis, some suggest that religious tourism is best explored in the context of the relationship between the consumer (tourist / pilgrim) and supplier / host (Howe, 2001; Rinschede, 1992). However, a limited body of research focuses on this particular issue, a possibly surprising omission given the historical and expanding link between tourism and religion yet one that this thesis addresses.
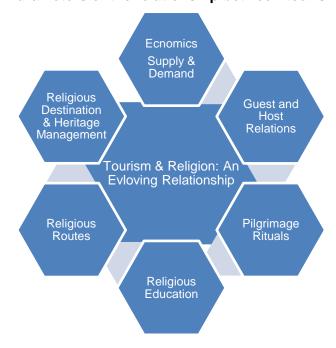
Figure 2.2: Parameters of the relationship between tourism and religion

Overall, then, it is evident that there has long been a relationship between tourism and religion. For much of history, this relationship has been restricted to what may be defined strictly as religious tourism (see Section 2.3 below), or travel for specifically religious purposes. In more recent times, tourism related to religion has no longer remained confined to traditional pilgrimage whilst, as a significant contemporary sector of both domestic and international tourism markets, attention has increasingly turned to a variety of related issues, including the economics of supply and demand, religious tourist behaviour and rituals, host-guest inter-actions at religious sites and destination management issues (see Figure 2.2 above). Nevertheless, according to Vukonic (1998), religious tourism is one of the most understudied areas in tourism research whilst Griffin (2007: 17) asserts that religious or spiritual travellers are often ignored as a distinct grouping in tourism research, although more recent years have witnessed an upsurge in academic interest, including texts by Raj and Morpeth (2007), Raj and Griffen (2015) and Leppakari and Griffin (2016).

A detailed consideration of all the issues now studied under the banner of religious tourism is beyond the scope of this chapter, the principal concern being what religious tourism 'is'. Hence, the next section turns to definitions of the term 'religious tourism'.

2.3 Religious tourism: Definitions

Tourism in general, as a contemporary social and economic phenomenon, can be defined as:

> a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business / professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure (UNWTO, 2017).

Other definitions similarly emphasise that tourism involves the time-defined (usually up to one year) movement away from the normal place of residence, for a variety of purposes. For example, some two decades ago the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 1994) established the diverse categories of travel, including business, health, sport, education and, of course religion, that could for statistical purposes be considered forms of tourism. Such 'technical' definitions (Telfer & Sharpley, 2016: 6) do not, however, embrace the essence of tourism as a social activity and, therefore, attempts have also been made to define it conceptually. For example, Smith (1989: 1),

refers to a tourist as a 'temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place for the purpose of experiencing a change', whilst others suggest that tourism is not a distinctive activity but 'one, albeit highly significant dimension of temporary mobility' (Hall et al., 2005: 21).

Irrespective of these debates, however, religious tourism is a recognised and measured category of tourism, along with the ever-increasingly list of other categories and sub-categories that comprise the remarkable phenomenon that is contemporary tourism. Yes, what *is* religious tourism?

Most commonly, religious tourism is defined simply as a form of tourism 'whose participants are motivated either in part or exclusively for religious reasons' (Rinschede, 1992: 52; see also Sharpley, 2005; Sigaux, 1996). It has also been referred to as faith tourism (Yeoman, 2008b: 36-37), or a type of tourism in which pilgrims or tourists of faith travel independently or in groups for motives connected to religion or spirituality in their search for meaning. Faith tourists might be on a pilgrimage; equally, they may be leisure tourists. Significantly, this definition also embraces the idea that contemporary tourism displays parallel traits to religion in terms of the ritual, structure of the journey and the exploration of meaning and content (Allcock, 1998; Eade, 1992; Graburn, 1983; MacCannell, 1976; Turner and Turner, 1978); in short; modern tourists are, in effect, pilgrims seeking meaning elsewhere.

The latter point is considered later in this chapter but, for now, religious tourism is evidently a form of tourism, as defined above, at the heart of which lies faith or religion (Poria, 2003: 240) which may determine other aspects of people's lives and activities, such as dress, food and beverages, social and political views and, of course, travel motivations and behaviours (Levin, 1979; Mattila et al., 2001). Yet, broadly defining religious tourism and tourism motivated by religion of faith serves to disguise its inherent complexity and diversity. Specifically, collectively describing religious tourists as those travelling for religious reasons is useful for statistical purposes, but does not reveal differing motives and behaviours. For example, religious travel may be undertaken either individually or collectively whilst, as observed earlier in this chapter, different religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism, have their own theological interpretations and traditions of travel travelling interpretations (Jackowski, 2000).

At the same time, religious tourism may blend into other forms of tourism, such as cultural tourism or heritage tourism. Much depends on the overall purpose of the trip

and the how much of it is devoted to religious purposes. A tourist may, for example, visit a cathedral for prayer as part of a broader cultural tour of a city; whilst definitions of religious tourism become fuzzier if a tourist (who may have a faith) visits the cathedral out of cultural or historical interest. Nevertheless, Eliade (1987: 662) suggests that the reasons why cultural travel and religious travel are sometimes used synonymously is because the majority of cultural tourists visit religious sites as part of their itinerary, and are thus often referred as religious tourists or pilgrims.

In this sense, perhaps the 'purest' form of religious tourism is pilgrimage (see Smith, 1992). Pilgrimage is a form of tourism, the individual or collective act of moving from one place to another, often travelling via foreign countries, usually undertaken for religious meaning. Moreover, the overall trip comprises the pilgrimage. Nevertheless, the meaning of or motivations for that pilgrimage may vary. Pilgrimage has an arbitration function between the natural and the cultural world and between the natural and the paranormal world (Ratzinger, 1995: 125). For some, it may represent a religious holiday (Qurashi, 2017: 97-99); for others, however, it is not a holiday (Sherratt & Hawkins, 1972: 141) but, rather, a transformational journey during which important transformations may occur; new insights may be gained, deeper understanding of the self and the world may be attained, new and old places in the heart are visited, blessings are received, healing takes place, and on return from the pilgrimage, life is seen with different eyes and nothing will ever be quite the same again. In short, a 'traditional' pilgrimage is typically a journey for religious reasons, usually to a recognized religious / pilgrimage destination (Sherratt & Hawkins, 1972). Nevertheless, not only may traditional pilgrimage routes be travelled for non-religious (but potentially spiritual) purposes, what (Liutikas, 2012) refers to broadly as 'valuistic' journeys, but meaningful trips to non-religious sites, such as war graves, are increasingly referred to as pilgrimages (Sharpley, 2009).

Such interpretations, however, 'stretch' the fundamental (religious) basis of religious tourism and, hence, for the purposes of this thesis, religious tourism may be defined as a form of tourism in which people of faith travel individually or in groups for reasons related to religion or spirituality and a quest for meaning. Thus, religious tourism encompasses all types of travel that are motivated by religion and where the destination is a religious site, and these sites may not necessarily be associated with current religions since there are many religions in the history of the world have been extinct (Blackwell, 2007: 37).

2.4 Religious tourism: A brief history

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism and existed to some extent prior to the emergence of Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. Indeed, religiously motivated tourism is perhaps as old as religion itself and, thus, arguably the oldest kind of tourism (Lanczkowski, 1982: 150). For example, Egyptians, Greeks and Jews expressed their devotion through religiously motivated trips (Horner & Swarbrooke, 1999), whilst travel for religious reasons also existed in early Africa and Asia; for example, in ancient times the Zoroastrians undertook pilgrimages in ancient times (Runciam, 1987).

At the outset, in ancient history, religion and tourism experienced their initial relationship among peoples of the early high cultures where religious and political powers were closely tied (Digance, 2003). For instance, the religious centres in ancient Egypt, such as Abydos, Heliopolis, Thebes, Luxor and Karnak, attracted hundreds and thousands of pilgrims (Kreiner, 2006). The Hittites planned annual religious touristic festivals together with their King, occasions for which even war campaigns were interrupted. The Assyrians worshipped their God in Aleppo and Hierapolis where pilgrims from as far away as Arabia gathered together (Nolan & Nolan, 1989). The Babylonians, as well as others, worshipped the God Marduk in Babylon. There were also other historical holy places, such as Nippour, where pilgrims prayed for peace, or Namma, where they implored God for a long life (Jackson, Rinschede & Knapp, 1990).

According to the historical period of development, three major types of religious tourism sites from the past can be differentiated today (Shokeid, 1987; Weingrod, 1988), namely: holy sites from Biblical times in Jerusalem and its surroundings; the holy burial sites of Talmudic and Gabbalic Prophets from the first and fifth centuries in Galilee; and the burial sites of holy men and Prophets, which were especially popular in North Africa (Lanczkowski 1982; Martin 1987). Perhaps most prominent in the history of religious tourism, however, is Jerusalem. The city's religious tourism history can be traced back for more than 4000 years, whilst Israel is, literally, the Holy Land with Jerusalem marking its sacred center. For Christians, this was where Jesus (PBUH) was crucified and resurrected; for Muslims, this is from where Mohammad (PBUH) journeyed to heaven; and for Jews, the temple of Solomon is located in the city in this city (Andriotis, 2008: 70).

The crossroads for three great religions, the Holy Land has been coveted and fought over for centuries. The Muslims and Jews that call this region home share a family tree that goes back nearly 4,000 years (Mazumdar et al., 2004), to when the Prophet

Abraham (PBUH) had two sons. From Isaac came Israelites, from Ismael the Arabs. This ethnic mix in the Holy Land is complicated by religions. Israelites were Jewish, Christian worship Jesus (PBUH), and currently most Arabs in the region are Muslims, a religion that arrived much later with their Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in the 7th Century. Nowadays, Jerusalem may be considered to be the hub of religious tourism. The 12th Century crusader town of Akko, the mighty wall constructed by the Ottoman empire to surround Jerusalem, the church of Holy Sepulcher sacred to Christian pilgrims, the Dome of the Rock, valued by Muslims and the holiest place in Judaism, the Western Wall (Andriotis, 2008: 67); for so many pilgrims, Jerusalem is the closest place on earth to heaven. Jerusalem has a magnetic religious tourism appeal to all three great religions. Muslims believe that Mohammad (PBUH) travelled to heaven from here and they have worshipped on this place for 1,300 years. The Jews teach that, as a test of his faith, here Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son. However, God intervened and saved Isaac at a place now called the Temple Mount which has attracted worshippers for 3,000 years. Beyond the Temple Mount lies the Via Dolorosa, the route that Jesus (PBUH) is believed to have walked as he carried the cross. Pilgrims come from around Christendom to retrace his steps. Their journey culminates at the site of Jesus' (PBUH) crucifixion, marked the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This is one of the most sacred sites for Christian pilgrims as they also believed that Jesus is buried there (Steves, 2015).

Along similar lines, (Stark, 2009: 10) observes that in the ancient world many thousands of people journeyed to places of religious importance such as the temple of Isis on Philae Island in Egypt and the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi in Greece. The majority of religious tourism trips in Greece in the ancient period were made by individuals who, for various reasons, visited a particular holy site, and the organisation of 'official pilgrimages' may have developed more gradually (Jonkers, 2012). The ancient Greeks devoted much of their lives to religious expressions. There were numerous events organised to celebrate Gods, Herodotus claims, both in Egypt and Greece. There are many other religious memorials and shrines that testify to the great historical and cultural value of religious tourism.

Similarly, in the Arab world the religious tourism of Islam, the 'Hajj' (and the focus of this thesis) has its own historical religious tourism significance. It is the mandatory holy journey for each Muslim adherent, if one can afford it financially and physically, (Mahmoud, 2010). The Kaaba (the cube) has a vital role in the lives of Muslims. It represents the third pillar of Islam, 'Salah' which means praying five times a day facing the cubical structure of Kaaba where ever they are in the world; equally, the Kaaba is

considered to be the fifth pillar of Islam, as the ritual of Hajj cannot be performed without it (Sardar et al., 1978). The Hajj is discussed in detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Historically, then, the tourism element in religious travel has throughout time attracted people from all walks of the life who have a religious background. From ancient Roman times through to the present, people from all religions have been motivated to participate in and experience the process and rituals of religious tourism; moreover, it is often the historical roots of religious places, journeys and rituals that attract pilgrims and tourists (Chaney, 2000).

In short, it could be argued that the history of religious tourism is as rich as its constituent elements of tourism and religion. Over time, their relationship has evolved into the major phenomenon that religious tourism is today, the scale and scope of which is now considered.

2.5 Religious tourism: Scope and scale. A brief introduction

Yeoman (2000b) suggests that religious or faith-based tourism is one of the fastest and strongest growing sectors in international tourism today. For instance, the 'Hajj' alone generated at least US$16 Billion in 2012, whilst in 2000 it was forecast that around 30 million pilgrims would visit Rome and 4 million the Holy Land (Vijayanand, 2012; Qurashi, 2017). It must also be acknowledged, of course, that faith-based tourism is not just a feature of Christianity or Islam, but of almost every mainstream religion of the world (Woodward, 2004). Indeed, some places are important to more than one faith – as already considered, Jerusalem is sacred to three religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam – whilst other religions generate high levels of visitor activity. For example, more than five million Hindus annually take part in the Kumbh Mela (Jauhari, 2010: 560) while hundreds of thousands of Buddhists travel to Kandy in Sri Lanka every year to the Esala Perahara, a festival when the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Lord Buddha is marched through the town (UNESCO, 2000). And of course, some 2.5 million Muslims travel to the Holy City of Mecca each year to perform Hajj – one of the five pillars of Islam (Bianca, 2000: 235). The importance of the Hajj to the Saudi Arabian economy is considerable, with as noted above, revenue generated by the 2012 Hajj estimated to total US$16.5 Billion dollars (Arab News, 2013).

Religious tourism has in recent years attracted growing attention emerging as a fruitful area of sociological and business research (Delbecq, 2000; Konz & Ryan, 1999; Pesut, 2003). Particularly, commentators emphasize that religious tourism and related matters

are becoming of increasing significance to the destination (Maneri, 2006; Rustom, 2008). More specifically, the growing scope and scale of religious tourism have been observed to be positively affecting various businesses, markets and destinations around the world (Brownstein, 2008; Fernando and Jackson, 2006; Heintzman, 2003; Lewis & Geroy, 2003; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Indeed, the tourism industry in general, one of the world's most significant economic sectors (Rosentraub & Joo, 2009; Telfer & Sharpley, 2016; Vu & Turner, 2009), has been influenced by this upsurge in travel related to religion or spirituality (Finney et al., 2009; Geary, 2008; Tilson, 2001).

Sharpley (2009) argues that religious tourism or, more broadly, tourism that is religiously motivated, has in recent years increased both in scale and scope. Pilgrimage, for instance, recognised as one of the oldest forms of tourism (Digence, 2006; Kaelber, 2006; Raj & Griffen, 2015), now constitutes a significant sector of the contemporary tourism market. Indeed, the annual number of pilgrimage trips worldwide is conservatively estimated to total 155 million (ARC, 2011) whilst, more generally, the international religious tourists alone have been estimated to total 28.5 million, generating some US$19 billion annually in expenditure (Mintel, 2012).

These data suggest that religious tourism is not only gaining in scale but also scope and, moreover, that its significance lies not only the number, nature, behaviour and flow of religious tourists, but with other elements of it, such as businesses providing services, facilities and products in destinations around the world, which further contribute to religious tourism's scale and scope. So, what effects that scale and scope?

2.5.1 Factors underpinning religious tourism scope and scale
Today, religious tourists travel for numerous reasons (see section 2.5.3 below), although one of the principal reasons for pilgrimages and religiously motivated travels is the belief that being in a sacred location can bring healing or spiritual experiences or, more simply, just wanting to 'give it a try' (Andriotis, 2008). Specifically, in stress-dominated societies where conservative values may seem to have disappeared and more and more people are experiencing feelings of displacement and rootlessness, religion and faith act as islands of peace (Tilson, 2001: 36).

Consequently, the major flows of religious tourism are determined by the location of significant sites (see Table 2.2 below) whilst its increasing popularity is largely determined by the potential development of those sites. Certainly, present industry trends show that religious tourism has great economic potential and, in some cases, is

contributing significantly to regional development (Shinde, 2012: 280). In the case of Islam, the Hajj is considered to be the largest religious tourism gathering and the residents of Mecca have long earned a living by serving the needs of Muslim pilgrims (Ahmed, 1992; Pryor, 2007). Thus, over the last thirty years the Saudi Arabian government has invested more than US$35 billion, not only to improve facilities for pilgrims but to diversify so as to gain maximum economic advantage from religious tourism (Vijayanand, 2012; see also Chapter Four). Twelve million pilgrims visit the holy cities of Mecca and Medina each year; Mecca alone attracted 3.16 to 3.65 million pilgrims (Arab News, 2012), with the numbers expected to increase to 17 million by 2025 (Taylor, 2011; Wainwright, 2015).

From a Christian perspective, the population of the religious town of Lourdes' in France rose from 4,155 in 1858 to around 18,000 by 1980 (Rinschede 1986: 28-29) as the town expanded into one of the most celebrated Roman Catholic shrines in the world. It received 4,608,000 visitors in 1987, the vast majority of whom came in the short pilgrimage season between April and October. Thus, the site of Lourdes is a good example of how pilgrimage tourism can affect a destination's population growth. Lourdes, which currently receives the total of around of six million pilgrims annually from 140 different countries, has been experiencing a constant population growth since its beginning as a pilgrimage site (Vijayanand, 2012: 333). Similarly, Czestochowa in Poland, a town with a population of 250,000, attracts some 4.5 million pilgrims annually. Of course, some religious sites have been visited for centuries and the consequences of religious tourism develop over a long period of time. Sometimes, however, holy sites are discovered suddenly, bringing dramatic and sudden changes to the local residents, such as in the case of as Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Rountree, 2002: 480).

Similarly, from a Hindu perspective, India is a land of religious tourism, not only growing in scope but in scale as well. Pilgrims have since ancient times travelled for religious purposes from all over India. Practically, Indian religious tourism is not only considered to be the hub of local religions, such as, Hindu, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, but of internationally known religions as well, such as Islamic Sufism. Religious tourism in India has also provided a substantial contribution to Indian tourism, representing 13.7% percent in 2009 (Kamla-Raj, 2010: 101); in India, 70% of domestic tourists travel for religious purposes (Patel & Fellow, 2010). In fact; it is the largest economic sector in the country generating 20% of all the tourism revenue in 2010.

Table 2.2: Examples of famous sacred sites

United Kingdom	Stonehenge, Glastonbury, Avebury, St. Michael's Mount, Cornwall, Durham and York Cathedrals, Canterbury Cathedral, Bath, Cerne Abbas Giant, etc.
Egypt	Temple of Seti I and Osireion, Temple of Hathor, Temple of Horus, Temple of Isis, Red Pyramid, Monastery of St. Anthony
Israel	Mt. Zion, Dome of the Rock, Western Wall, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Via Dolorossa, Gethsemane, Tomb of Bib Maryam, Tomb of Prophet Musa, King David's Tomb, Tombs of sons of Hezir, Monument of Zechariah, Tomb of the Prophet Samuel on Nebi Samwill peak, Tomb of Simon the Just, Tomb of the Sanhedrin, Cave of the Nativity, etc.
Cyprus	Hala Sultan Tekke Mosque etc.
Ethiopia	Pilgrimage church of St. Tekla Haimanot, etc.
Iran	Imamzadas (Mausoleums) of Shah-e' Abdal-Azim, Shiraz: Mausoleum of Hazrat Ahmed ibn Musa (Shah Cheragh), Mausoleum of Imam Ali ibn Musa al Ridha (Imam Reza), Gowharshad Mosque etc.
France	Lourdes, Le Puy, Mont Saint-Michel, Rocamadour, Mt. Blanc, Vézelay, Saint Guilhem le Desert, Chartres, The Abbey of Conque Saintes Marie de la Mer etc.
Georgia	Hilltop church of Jvari Monastery on pagan holy sites
India	Dwarka; Krishna temple of Dwarkadhish, Amritsar; Hari Mandir Golden Temple,etc
Greece	Samothrace, Sanctuary of the Great Gods, Sacred Geography of Ancient Greece, Parthenon, Athens, Interesting Facts about the Parthenon, Mt. Olympus, Tinos Island, Delphi, Patmos, Meteora,Mount Athos, Asklepion Shrine, Santorini, Dodona etc.
Ireland	Blarney Stone, Cork, Ireland, Blarney Stone Facts, Mt. Croach Patrick, Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, The Round Towers of Ireland, Skellig Michael, Loughcrew, Carrowmore, Holy Wells of Ireland, Carrowkeel, Stone Rings of Ireland etc.
Italy	Assisi, Assisi Facts, The Holy House of Loreto, Temple of Hera, Paestum, Monte Gargano, Other Italian Shrines, Catholic Sacred Sites of Sicily, Greek Temples of Sicily
Iraq	Al Najaf; Mausoleum of 1st Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, Masjid Hannana, Grave of Prophet Adam - 1st prophet and man on earth, Grave of Prophet Nuh, Al Kufah; Masjid Kufa, Masjid Hadhrat Ali, Mausoleum of Muslim ibn Aquil, Karbala; Mausoleum of 3rd Imam Hadhrat Husayn ibn Ali, son of Imam Husayn etc.
Pakistan	Data Darbar Shrine, Mausoleum of Dadaji Ganjbaksh, Shrine of Hazrat Shah Hussain, Shrine of War Mubarak, Shrine of Sadruddin Badsha, Shrine of Khwaja Khadir on Island of Bakhar, Shrines of Hazrat Bahuddin Zakriya, Shah Rukn-e-Alam, Bad-Shahee Mosque, Daraza Sharif: Tomb of Sachal Sarmast,Shrine etc.
Saudi Arabia	Mecca; Ka'aba, Hajar al-Aswad, Hijr Ismail, Well of Zamzam, Jannat al-Mualla cemetary, Jabal Nur, Masjid Hudaibiya, Jabal Rahmah, Masjid Numrah Medina; Masjid an-Nabawi, Masjid Quba, Jannatul Baqi cemetary, Grave of Hamza, Masjid Qiblatayn, Grave of Lady Hawa (Eve, wife of Adam) etc.
Russia	Monastery of Sergiev Posad, Monastery of Trinity-St. Sergius Sergiev Posad, St. Sophia cathedral in Novgorod, Monastery of Optina Pustyn, Monastery of the Transfiguration, etc.

Source: adapted from https://sacredsites.com

One example of religious tourism in India is 'Tirupati', where the Lord Ventekshwara Temple attracts between 18 and 20 million foreign and domestic visitors per annum, indicating the scope and scale of this type of tourism (Andrea et al., 2014).

Thus, religious tourism, as a specific form of tourism, occurs around the world but, at the same time, the question arises: which places are considered to be the main religious tourism destinations for pilgrims and other religious tourists?

2.5.2 The main religious tourism places
The borderless phenomenon that is religious tourism has its roots in places located around the world, from small Christian churches to major cathedrals, from Hindu temples to the River Ganges, from the Bahai Shrine to Garden of Haifa in Israel, from Swayambhunath Buddhist Stupa to the Gautama Buddha in Nepal, and from Mecca to the whole Muslim world (Shackley, 2002; Sharpley, 2009). Some are specific buildings or shrines; others are more generally places (rivers, mountains, etc.).

The mechanisms of place have been recognised by numerous authors who ascribe different dimensions to the concept of place. Relph (1976) recognises the three rudiments of place as the physical setting, the activities are undertaken there and the cultural meanings of the place. Alternatively, Agnew (1987) claims that place holds three basic criteria, namely, location, locale and sense of place, whilst Gieryn (2000) offers a similar theory, proposing that in order for a 'place' to emerge (from 'space') there are the basics of geographic location (place), material form (physicality) and meaningfulness.

These above theories are mirrored in the general academic consensus that place is defined by three interwoven elements, the physical setting, the person, and the cultural component – rituals, practices or activities – at the place (Sack, 1997; Stedman, 2002). When these physical, individual and cultural elements mix with each other, an emotional connection to place becomes significant in place building and place identity (Proshansky, 1978: 150), whilst, in the context of religious tourism, the significance of place is determined by all three: the physical places (e.g. a temple), the individual (the pilgrim / tourists) and its meaning (religious significance). For example, in Islam, the significance of the place is vital, as two out of five Pillars of Islam cannot be fulfilled without a certain place. Firstly, the Muslims have to perform five prayers (Prayer is the second Pillar of Islam) in one day; for this purpose, the place to perform Prayer should be mandatorily hygienically tidy and the Muslim must face towards the Holy Kaaba located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Secondly, for Muslims to fulfill the fifth pillar of Islam which is Hajj, they must visit Kaaba located in Mecca Saudi Arabia for circumambulation (Ali,1997: 807-832).Thus, when the physical (Kaaba, and a tidy place), the individual (Muslim) and cultural elements (religion) mix with each other, an emotional connection is created between the follower (Muslim) and Allah (God) with a

place acting as a bridge among these connections, consequently creating a significance of place building and place identity.

Similarly, tourism signifies a change of place involving travel away from one center of meaning (home) to a place (destination) that provides new meaningful experiences (Urry, 1995). Therefore, the significance of place in religious tourism is vital, as pilgrims or tourists obtain the special meaning of the pilgrimage journey from the place / destination. Whether the pilgrim is Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian or Muslim, each and every religion required a typical place to worship.

In Hinduism, which evolved in around 1000 A.D. from Brahmanism, the religiously motivated journeys have played a significant role from the very beginning. Places such as rivers and streams, predominantly the Ganges, are the most significant pilgrimage goals in south Asian Hinduism. In these places, Hindus see a means to the perfection of life. They seek there the penance of sin, the accomplishment of value, interaction with the highest, and an end to the suffering of reincarnation (Lanczkowski 1982: 152). Annually, over 20 million pilgrims visit some 150 well known holy places in India (Bhardwaj, 1973: 77).

Conversely, Buddhism, which originated in the sixth century A.D, emphasizes the meaning of the pilgrimage and promises the dying pilgrim direct admission into divine Nirvana. The pilgrimage places are mainly related to the life of Buddha, his activities, religions and legends. Buddhism claims significant holy locations in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Tibet, northern India and elsewhere (Sievers, 1985: 260; Stoddard, 1988: 105). Lamaism, a singular form of Buddhism practised in Tibet, has its religious center in Lhasa. Tibet's pilgrims seek out natural places such as caves, springs, lakes and mountains. Pilgrimage journeys to these places are quite often associated with the special festivals every 12 years, at which more than 10,000 pilgrims gather (Eiki, 1987).
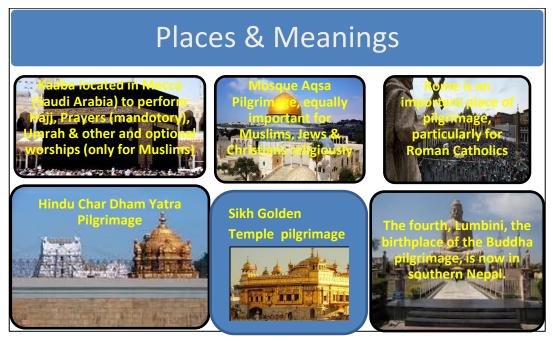
For Christians, the places in the Holy Land associated with the meaningful events in the life and works of Jesus are the preferred sites of pilgrimages. This has particularly been the case since the end of the persecution of Christians under Constantine the Great in the fourth century. At the same time, the holy place of the martyrs in readily accessible Rome was visited. After the conquering of Jerusalem by the Seldschuken, the pilgrims turned even more to Rome. The stream of pilgrims to Jerusalem came completely to an end after the conquest of Constantinople. In its place, numerous sites in Europe appeared where pilgrims worshipped relics of all sorts. As the political situation in Italy finally prevented the pilgrimage to Rome as well, Santiago de

Compostela, with its Grave of the Holy James, became the most visited pilgrimage site in the medieval Western world. Pilgrims of all classes flowed to this area (Rinschede, 1992:58).

Additionally, the factions of the Bahai religion also build huge temples in all parts of the world. This was undertaken in order to avoid the dependency upon visiting the Bahai center in Haifa, Israel, for certain religious practices.

By logical extension, it can be argued that religious tourism is considered to be a worldwide phenomenon directly associated with the importance of place. It is to be found in every high religion, as well as in a number of smaller religious communities and in every cultural part of the world, certainly in differing significance and influence of the place. It is to be estimated that there are 200 million pilgrims alone who take part in international, national, and super-regional pilgrimage journeys places or destinations. Examples of major religious tourism places, religious buildings and the meaning of religious places can be observed in Figure 2.3.

Figure: 2.3: Places and meanings

The above evidence indicates that the importance of place in religious tourism is one of the key life lines for the sustainability of the religious tourism in general. However, it is also important to explore the main forms that religious tourism takes.

2.5.3 The main forms of religious tourism

Different forms of religious tourism depend to some extent on the religious sites and teachings (ideologies) of religion. Religious tourism related to visiting shrines, temples, churches, mosques, synagogue and religious festivities is significantly growing worldwide.

According to Santos (2002: 40), religious tourism embraces some or all of six characteristics. It is:

i. voluntary
ii. temporary
iii. unpaid travel
iv. motivated by religion
v. supplemented by other motivations
vi. pilgrimage

In contrast, Nolan and Nolan (1989: 4-19), in a study of Christian pilgrimages in Western Europe, found that the religious tourism could be distinguished into three groups:

i. Tourism to pilgrimage shrines: defined as places that serve as the goals of religiously motivated journeys from beyond the immediate locality. For instance, shrine of St. Anthony in Padua and the birthplace of St. Francis in Assisi to Cascia, Lanciano and to Shrine of Padre Pio in San Giovanni Rotondo, (Yeoman, 2008a).
ii. Tourism to religious tourist attractions: in the form of structures or sites of religious significance with historic background, for instance, Canterbury Cathedral.
iii. Artistic importance: festivals with religious associations, such as the ten-yearly Passion Play at Oberammagau.

Alternatively, Yeoman (2008a: 181), Wright (2008: 10-15) and Papathanassis (2011: 50-53) identify different forms of religious tourism:

i. Pilgrimages and tours
ii. Missionary and volunteer travel
iii. Religious events
iv. Fellowship travel

These are now considered in brief below:

2.5.3.1 Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is not only a symbol of Christian life deeply rooted in the Bible but is celebrated in the holy books of other religions, such as the Torah for Jews and the Quran for Muslims (Lanczkowski 1982: 150). Throughout history, pilgrimage has been a religious phenomenon that set people on a physical journey with the aim of achieving spiritual outcomes (Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Pilgrimage is one of the oldest and famous forms of expressing religious worship. It is also one of the oldest forms of tourism and is an integral factor of the tourist industry. Onions (1983) describes pilgrimage as a journey made by a pilgrim who travels from place to place, usually journeying a long distance and to a sacred place as an act of devotion. Gonzalez (2005: 156) adds that pilgrimage refers to an ordered march of a group of people, usually with a religious connotation, whilst for Vukonić (1996:117), pilgrimage is an organised visit or journey, organised in the sense that there are religious motives for going to a place and that the activities at that place include religious rituals.

Throughout history, all the religions of the world have given substance to hope by proclaiming to believers that a visit to a holy place would relieve all or some of their troubles, whether spiritual or worldly. Visits to holy places for the sake of purification, redemption, fulfilment of vows, healing, or something else are called pilgrimages. At a basic level, Griffin (2007:18) believes that pilgrimage can be viewed as any travel that includes a religious experience, and such journeys are obviously a combination of a religious experience and travel.

Pilgrimages is one of the major forms of religious tourism (Papathanassis, 2011: 49) in Christianity, exploring the roots of Christian faith, discovering the contributions of Christianity to Western civilisation, learning about radical Christians in the past or searching for spiritual or emotional healing. Alternatively, it can be combining a physical holiday with a pilgrimage, such as the Santiago de Compostela trail. Europe offers almost twenty centuries of Christian heritage, history and faith, including the roots of many Christian denominations. The Vatican, Martin Luther and C.S. Lewis's home are just a few major interests for Christian pilgrims to Europe (Wright, 2008: 110).

2.5.3.2 Missionary Travel

The main purpose of missionary travel is Christian evangelism, church planting and humanitarian work. The opportunities for such trips today are countless, as there are hundreds of organisations for this purpose. Missionary travel takes the form of both long and short term missions (Wright, 2008: 187). In volunteer tourism, people offer their help in different humanitarian needs, such as in the chaos caused by the hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, where Christian love is proclaimed in action. Both missionary and volunteer travels are organised by churches and mission organisations (Papathanassis, 2011: 52; Wright, 2008: 187). Additionally, to experience Spring Harvest by serving God as a volunteer is also part of 'Essential Christian' missionary and volunteer travels (springharvest.org).

2.5.3.3 Religious events

Religious events, such camps, conferences and retreats, form a large part of religious tourism today. The significance of these is crucial for the whole sector of tourism, as tour operators, hotels and airlines are often all included. Some international religious events, like World Youth Day, can draw as many as one million people (Papathanassis, 2011: 50-51). One example is in the UK, where Spring Harvest (see springharvest.org) offers different programs during their annual three-week event. For instance, in the morning, whether young or old, in a big family or alone, lively or quiet, energetic or tired, all participants worship, pray, and explore the Bible together. In the afternoon, different passages from the book of James are read in order to piece together the different aspects of discipleship whilst at evening worship; preaching and responses come in varying styles, to help to find the best way to connect with God.

Although, travelling domestically to religious events such as Spring Harvest is popular in many countries, precise data regarding the numbers of people travelling for this purpose are not however compiled.

2.5.3.4 Fellowship tours

There is growth of the popularity in fellowship tours on which people of the same interests and goals embark on religious tours. Participating together with similar-minded people also for recreational reasons makes the experience more joyful and meaningful and in itself strengthens the faith and the purpose of the trip (Kasim, 2011: 449; Wright, 2008: 9- 12).

Importantly, the above forms of religious tourism have been discussed primarily from a Christian or Western perspective. Given the focus of this thesis, the following sub-section summarizes Islamic forms of religious tourism.

2.5.4 Forms of religious tourism from an Islamic perspective

Like other religions, Islamic religious tourism may be categorized into five forms:

    i.   Hajj (the mandatory pilgrimage journey)

    ii.   Umrah (not entirely mandatory pilgrimage journey)

    iii.   Rihla (not mandatory pilgrimage journey)

    iv.   Ziyara (not mandatory pilgrimage journey), (Timothy and Iverson, 2006; Bhardwaj, 1998; Kessler, 1992).

    v.   Tableegh (preaching Islam to Muslims and Non-Muslims)

The Hajj is an obligatory (if one is physically and financially capable) journey for all Muslims (Clingingsmith et al., 2008; Haq & Jackson, 2009), whereas 'Umrah' can be performed any time without the restrictions of any date.

Rihla is a Muslim's religious journey in search of knowledge, commerce, health or research (Kessler, 1992:1 48). Numerous Muslim itinerants, pioneers and intellectuals have achieved high spiritual status through Rihla, including Sufi Rumi (Rustom, 2008: 11) and Ibn Battuta (Morgan, 2001: 3).

Ziyara is described as a Muslim's journey to visit shrines, mosques or monasteries for spiritual growth and devotion towards the famous spiritual people (Bhardwaj, 1998; Buehler, 1997; Kessler, 1992; Timothy & Iverson, 2006).

The final form of religious tourism which is unique in itself called 'Tableegh', or preaching Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims (Bhardwaj, 1998; Sikand, 2006; Timothy & Iverson, 2006). Tableegh has its roots in early twentieth century India, and is a tradition of Muslim men and women travelling, staying in various Mosques around the world to meet all Muslims and non-Muslims, and lecturing or preaching to them about the spirit and spiritual practices of Islam (Sikand, 2006:176).

2.5.5 Different perspectives on the forms of religious tourism

In contrast to the above discussion, Rinschede (1992: 57) adopts a different perspective when looking at the forms religious tourism, differentiating different forms according to the criteria of length of stay: either short-term without an overnight stay or

long-term with an overnight stay of at least one day. Short-term religious tourism differentiates itself by spatially fractional travel over short distances. The aim of such tourism is to go to a religious centre with domestic, regional, or super-regional pilgrimage sites or to participate in a religious festivity, a religious conference, or a church meeting. Conversely, long-term religious tourism involves visits to religious centers for numerous days or weeks. It does not limit itself to the visitation of national and international pilgrimage sites; rather, it includes the visitation of other national and international religious centers (Rinschede, 1992: 58-59), such as Lourdes, which has developed since its beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century into an international pilgrimage center (Nolan & Nolan, 1989; Rinschede, 1985). Rome and Mecca are, however, considered unique international pilgrimage centres; Rome carries a special position among the world churches as a result of the pilgrimage journey that is at times required of believers, whereas only true pilgrims gather in Mecca, as access is denied to those of other persuasions.

Fatima in Portugal has a parallel international catchment area but with the appeal of a national religious centre, as is evident from the enormous number of Portuguese visitors. Guadalupe retains an international character because of the worship of its saint in all of America; yet it remains as a national holy place, the goal of national pilgrimages. This is the case, because, as in Mexico, every other country in Latin America possesses a parallel national pilgrimage site. The Hindu pilgrimage of Benares (Varanasi) on the Ganges River is of tremendous national importance; it is generally assumed that the water there is exceptionally holy (Singh & Singh, 1987).

There is consistent evidence that most forms of religious tourism are tied to religion, religious rituals and teachings. In history, religious trips always were multifunctional journeys, even when the religious factors seemed dominated. Yet, in contemporary societies, the religious motivation seems to be becoming less important than in ancient societies, with pilgrims / tourists undertaking such journeys for more broadly spiritual reasons. Therefore, pilgrimages that will flourish most will be those that meet the needs of both religious and spiritual (or n on-religious) followers. Thus, the next section of this chapter considers the element of spirituality in tourism from both Western and Islamic perspectives.

2.6 Tourism as religion (the spiritual dimension of tourism)

An on-going debate surrounds the extent to which the contemporary tourist can be considered a modern day pilgrim. Specifically, since MacCannell (1976) first proposed that that the modern tourist is a secular pilgrim, that tourism is a 'secular substitute for

organized religion' (Allcock, 1998: 37), it has been argued that tourism represents a sacred or spiritual journey. To put it another way, as Graburn (1989: 22) suggests, 'tourism… is functionally and symbolically equivalent to other institutions that humans use to embellish and add meaning to their lives'.

Although relatively little empirical evidence exists to support this assertion, there can be little doubt that, for some at least, tourism has become a means of satisfying spiritual longings (Little & Schmidt, 2006; Sharpley, 2009; Sharpley & Jepson, 2011). Indeed, for some, a spiritual experience is the desired outcome of engaging in tourism. Thus, tourism is considered a journey in search of new and meaningful experiences of place. Nevertheless, questions immediately arise, such as: in what way has spirituality come to be observed as discrete from religion? And, to what extent is a spiritual experience on outcome of tourists' excursions?

In the past, religion and spirituality have been observed as synonymous; to be religious is to be spiritual. In more modern times, however, understandings of spirituality have defied this assumption, it being claimed that the notion of spirituality is now detached from religious doctrine (Houtman & Aupers, 2007; Marler & Hadaway, 2002; Pargament, 1999; Thomas, 2006; Zinnbauer, Pargament & Scott, 1999). Specifically, reflecting an evident secularization in Western societies, a shift towards a search for spirituality has evolved in response to society's disenchantment and discontent with the constraints of traditional religious institutions, rituals and dogma (Beckford, 1989; Flanagan & Jupp, 2007), intensified by a re-focus from social expectations and norms to individual views on experiences of the sacred (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Schmidt, 2005).

The growing secularisation in the Western world, reflected in the deinstitutionalisation of religion, is widely recognised (Harvey, 2003; Houtman & Aupers, 2007; Knox et al., 2015; Lambert, 2004). At the same time, it has been proposed that 'the modern empirical worldview has replaced the miraculous religious worldview' (Roberts & Yamane, 2011: 326), and that the movement away from conservative religious practice since the mid-1800s is an outcome of advances in rational scientific knowledge and understanding (Szerszynski, 2005). This evolution in thinking has been manifested in a loss in confidence in religious organisations and leaders (Schmidt, 2005), leading to a questioning of conservative faith systems.

Putting it another way, religion traditionally relied on the blind faith of its members as a means of sanctioning arguably dogmatic and irrational practices that now contradicts the rational thinking and individuality of the post-modern world (Danesh, 1997). At the same time, factors such as globalisation, technological progress and the weakening of cultural and territorial boundaries have also 'combined to undermine the influence of religion in social life' and allowed exposure to other religious/spiritual influences (Maguire & Weatherby, 1998: 171). Nevertheless, the argument that the Western world has become secularised and that religion and spirituality have nothing in common does not enjoy collective support (Lambert, 2004). For example, Flanagan et al., (2007: 32) claim that 'in modern societies the sacred is not so much in decline as being fragmented and diffused'. In other words, secularisation does not indicate a decline in religion but, rather, its deregulation, (Beckford, 1989). Additionally, research reveals a gradual increase in people, predominantly youth, who are returning to religious ideals (Harvey, 2003; Lambert, 2004) although, in the UK at least, figures suggest a continuing decline in church attendance. In 2014, for example, for the first time fewer than one million people (or 1.8% of the population) attended church on a regular basis (Aslan, 2014).

Whether or not there is diminishing adherence to formal religious practice in modern societies, the result has not been a religious vacuum; rather, there has been a move from formal religious constructs to non-traditional and individuated expressions of religious and/or spiritual beliefs, (Houtman & Aupers, 2007; Lambert, 2004; Wuthnow, 1998). Indeed, according to Bouma (2006: 5), secularism is a delusion and spirituality is not in decline but has 'dripped out of the monopolistic control of formal societies' and is now evident in a diversity of both organised religion and private spiritualties.

Contributing to the argument that there now exists a conceptual differentiation between religion and spirituality, Hay and Socha (2005: 590) note the 'rising propensity for people to split apart the two concepts'. For instance, Teasedale (1999: 17) states that 'being religious connotes belonging to and practising a religious tradition' whereas 'being spiritual suggests a personal commitment to a process of inner development that engages us in our totality'. Certainly, it has become progressively accepted in western societies that an individual can be religious without being spiritual and vice versa (Teasedale, 1999; Thomas, 2006). Therefore, it is now commonly recognised, at least from a Western perspective, that religion and spirituality are no longer observed as inseparable but more often recognised as separate objects (Bregman, 2005; Estanek, 2006).

As discussed shortly, this contradicts Islamic religious spiritual ideology, which considers that the soul can only be spiritual with religion. However, in exploring the distinction further, Pargament (1999) argues that religion can be observed as a static entity, but spirituality as a progression that permits persons to pursue their own personal trail to spiritual illumination, a perspective that allows for emerging understandings or interpretations of spirituality. Thus, it is evident that, whether or not they have a religious upbringing, individuals may adopt varying attitudes and practices towards achieving spiritual fulfilment, in essence taking a pick and mix approach (de Castella, 2013; de Vulpian, 2008) to spiritual concerns and the nature of existence. However, this then raises the question: what is 'spirituality'? Rowe (2001: 41), for example, states:

> The word 'spiritual' might once have meant simply 'relationship to God' but now it is a Humpty Dumpty word that means whatever the speaker wants it to mean. Thus, whenever someone uses the word 'spiritual' to me, I have to ask, 'What do you mean by "spiritual?"'

In addressing this question, spirituality might traditionally be defined as an inner experience of the individual when he/she senses divinity, especially as evidenced by the effect of this experience on his/her behaviour when he/she actively attempts to harmonize his/her life with this sense of divinity (Clark, 1958). Within the current debate, however, spirituality has been considered in a religious context to be the personalised and subjective element of religious understanding (Hill, 2002; Poria, Butler & Airey, 2003) while, in a non-religious context, it has been described as an unfolding mystery, harmonious interconnectedness and an inner strength (Pesut, 2003). Nevertheless, a general and two-dimensional view states that, first, spirituality is the desire and need to find meaning and purpose in one's life in order to live an integrated life and, second, it includes a belief in a supreme power controlling the entire universe (Mitroff & Denton, 1999).

A synthesis of various perspectives on spirituality highlights three key elements. Specifically, spirituality embraces:

i. Enlightened attention to a God, supreme being or higher spirit,
ii. Attention to the self, and
iii. Attention to others (Mitroff, 2003)

The notion that spirituality is linked to belief in a higher spirit or supreme power is supported by others; Piedmont & Leach (2002), for example, argue that people have always been on a quest to connect with some higher being and the sacred truth, a truth described by Sufi Rumi as the 'non-delimited formless form of the unseen' (cited in Rustom, 2008: 4).

However, for others, belief in a higher power is not fundamental to achieving a sense of spirituality. That is, religion is believed to be a socially-constructed singularity based on social and historical beliefs that permit individuals the choice of whether to trust or not; conversely, spirituality is thought to be an inherent part of human nature, irrespective of religious or non-religious beliefs (Flanagan & Jupp, 2007; Hay & Socha, 2005). Alternatively stated, it is argued that the soul has no choice about being spiritual or not, as spirituality is innate, an inherent aspect of being human (Maslow, 1971). Consequently, the existential quest for connection to the material world and understandings of human existence may be considered a natural and instinctive means of fostering one's inborn spirituality (Teasedale, 1999). Certainly, humanity, from primeval to contemporary times, has engaged in spiritual practices, rituals and rites, and the spiritual pursuit of enlightenment is reflected in a diversity of methods, mythologies and expeditions that individuals have engaged in throughout history (Schmidt, 2005). In short, if spirituality is natural to the human state, then all individuals will, at some point in their lives, purposely or instinctively pursue methods of discovering and developing their spiritual self.

Nevertheless, a response to the question 'what is spirituality?' still remains blurred, as evidenced by numerous contemporary definitions of the term (Bregman, 2005; McSherry & Cash, 2004; Schmidt & Little, 2007; Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Zinnbauer, Pargament & Scott, 1999). It has been defined as, amongst other things, 'a desire for connectedness, relating to an invisible sacred presence' (Griffiths, 2006: 3), 'a search for universal truth' (Scott, 1997: 108) or 'a conscious or unconscious belief that relates to the world and gives meaning and definition to existence' (Scott, 1997: 115). Alternatively, Bouma (2006: 12) describes spirituality as 'an experiential journey of encounter and relationship with otherness, with powers, forces and beings beyond the scope of everyday life' whilst, for others, it may simply be a sense of connectedness with the material world, with the physical place, with others and with the self, leading some question whether (non-religious) spirituality can be equated with sense of place (Sharpley & Jepson, 2014).

Perhaps as a consequence of the ambiguity of the term, spirituality has today become a catch-all word used by persons, marketers, business organisations and even in political contexts to label any type of transformative path that helps an individual to find internal truth, to understand human existence and to connect with the world (Carrette & King, 2005; Danesh, 1997; Marques, 2006). And, irrespective of definitions, spirituality has become an individual contemporary quest for meaning and purpose in life, a quest that tourism may fulfil (Digance, 2003; Schmidt & Little, 2007; Willson, 2010). In other words tourism in general may offer emotional or spiritual fulfilment in a process that is distinctive from the specific activity of religious tourism as defined in this thesis. And given the focus of this thesis, it is important to note that the above discussions regarding spiritualty are from an explicitly Western perspective. Hence, the following sub-section explores the concept spirituality from an Islamic perspective.

2.6.1 Spirituality from an Islamic perspective

Islamic approaches to spirituality, religion and secularity differ from those in the West and it is therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, necessary to consider these differences. In other words, without a clear understanding of the distinctions between Western and Islamic interpretations of spirituality, the ambiguities surrounding the concept of spirituality remain; it becomes problematic to understand that the spirituality of Islam not only transcends the dualism of spirit and matter but is the centre of its integrated and unified concept of life (Aziz, 1987: 255).

Islam as a religion interprets spirituality differently but, arguably, more clearly than contemporary Western societies. Specifically, an individual's relationship with Allah (directly or indirectly) is the focal point of Islamic spirituality. At the heart of the human-divine relationship is divine affection. Allah's affection for humans is made clear in divine sayings such as the following:

> God ever mighty and majestic says: 'O Child of Adam, it is your right from me that I am a lover for you. So, by my right from you, be for me a lover', (Ibn Arabi, 2004: 24).

Additionally, Qur'anic stories and statements show Allah was always with His Prophets and His servants. In turn, the Prophets sought always to serve Allah, the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) saying:

Surely, my prayer and my devotion, my life, and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. He has no partner, and this is what I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims, (Ibn Arabi, 1999: 162-163).

The mutual relationship between the divine and human beings is thus regarded as an important Islamic value within Muslim spirituality. Evidence of this mutuality is articulated in the following prophetic saying:

God ever mighty and majestic is He, says, 'I am present in my servant's thought of me, and I am with him when he remembers me.' If he approaches me by a hand's breath, I draw near to him by an arm's length, and if he draws near to me by an arm's length, I draw to him by a fathom. If he comes to me walking, I come to him running (Ibn Arabi, 2004: 24).

Moreover, unlike contemporary Western approaches to spirituality, religious rituals are an integral part of Islamic spirituality as they provide a means to demonstrate and maintain a relationship with Allah. Furthermore, they are an outward expression of the believer's desire to maintain closeness to Allah, especially during times of psycho-spiritual or physical threat.

According to Islam, Allah has appointed the human soul as His vicegerent (Khalifah) in this universe. He has invested it with a certain authority and given it certain responsibilities and obligations for the fulfilment of which he has endowed it with the best and most suitable physical frame. The body has been created with the sole object of allowing the soul to use it in the exercise of its authority and the fulfilment of its religious duties and responsibilities. The body is not a prison for the soul; rather, it is a workshop or factory and, if the soul is to grow and develop, it is only through this workshop. This world is not a place of punishment in which the human soul, unfortunately, finds itself, but a field in which Allah has sent it to work and do its duty towards Him (Ayoub, 1984: 4).

Therefore, spiritual growth should not take the form of a man turning away from this workshop and retreating into a corner. Rather, a man should live and work in it, and give the best account of himself that he can. It is a kind of examination for him; every aspect and sphere of life is, as it were, a question paper; the home, the family, the neighborhood, the society, the marketplace, the office, the factory, the school, the law courts, the police station, the parliament, the peace conference and the battlefield, all represent question papers which man has been called upon to answer. If he leaves

most of the answer-book blank, he is bound to fail the examination. Success and development are only possible if a man devotes his whole life to this examination and attempts to answer all the question papers he can (Renard, 1996: 322).

In addition, Islam rejects and condemns the ascetic view of life, and proposes a set of methods and processes for the spiritual development of man, not outside this world but inside it. The real place for the growth of the spirit is in the midst of life and not in solitary places of spiritual hibernation. In his capacity as the vicegerent (Khalifah) of God, man is answerable to Him for all his activities. It is his duty to use all the powers which he has been given in accordance with the Divine will. He should utilise to the fullest extent all the faculties and potentialities bestowed upon him for seeking God's approval. In his dealings with other people, he should behave in such a way as to try to please God (Antoun, 1989: 79). In brief, all his energies should be directed towards regulating the affairs of this world in the way in which God wants them to be regulated. The better a man does this, with a sense of responsibility, obedience and humility, and with the object of seeking the pleasure of the Lord, the nearer will he be to God. In Islam, spiritual development is synonymous with closeness to Allah. Similarly, he will not be able to get near to Allah if he is lazy and disobedient. And the distance from Allah signifies, in Islam, the spiritual fall and decay of man.

From an Islamic perspective, therefore, the sphere of activity of the religious man and the secular man is not the same. The religious man will work with greater enthusiasm than the secular man. The man of religion will be as active as the man of the world, perhaps more active in his domestic and social life, which extends from the confines of the household to the market square, and even to international conferences (Moezzi, 2011: 23). What will distinguish their actions will be the nature of their relationship with Allah and the aims behind their actions. Whatever a religious man does, will be done with the feeling that he is answerable to God, that he must try to secure divine pleasure, that his actions must be in accordance with God's laws (like Sharia law of Islam). Therefore, unlike in contemporary Western societies, in Islamic religious tourism, the freedom to choose one's own path of faith without the conviction and constraints exerted by religion mandates is not tolerable. The general acceptance of religious beliefs has allowed people to have spirituality only with religious faith and religious principles, though these differ among various Islamic sects (discussed more in depth in Chapter Four). In general, however, this is the essence of Islam regarding spirituality.

2.7 Research into tourism and religion: The Western literature

Thus far, this chapter has considered the relationship between tourism and religion specifically within the context of what is referred to as religious tourism, a recognized, distinctive and growing sector of both domestic and international tourism markets worldwide. Not only have the origins of the tourism-religion relationship been discussed, but also the evolution of religious tourism, its contemporary scope and scale and its different forms have been discussed in some detail. In addition, tourism has also been considered within the context of contemporary understandings of spirituality, as a secular journey in search of spiritual fulfilment.

Importantly, although reference has been made where appropriate to religious tourism with respect to Islamic forms of religious tourism (Section 2.5.4 above) and the significance of spirituality within Islam (Section 2.6.1), much of the discussion in this chapter has been from a predominantly Western perspective. This is perhaps, unsurprising, for two reasons.

First, and generally, Christianity may be considered to be the world's most theologically developed religion whose believers, mostly from the Western world, number more than two billion (Taylor, 2011: 267-268). Like other religions, Christianity is based on Gods, spirits, beliefs, systematised experiences, rituals, symbols, values, norms, communities, movements, organisations and institutions, and religious leaders or holy people who interpret the meaning of every word and religious act (Rinschede, 1992: 45). The Western Christian churches have had a philosophical effect on the course of antiquity in the Western world and the expansion of Christianity. One of its principal effects has been on the expansion of pilgrimage sites and travel to them, mainly in Europe. Influential religious personalities and theologians, specifically in the Roman Catholic Church, have been active in explaining the relationship between tourism and religion, as the recent increase in pilgrimage and tourism changed the religious focus of the Vatican to become more engaged in secular matters, more so than any other religion (Vukonić, 1992).

Second and more specifically, much of the (English language) literature / research exploring the relationship between tourism, religion and spirituality is (as is the case with tourism research more generally) largely undertaken from a Western perspective, perhaps unsurprisingly given the origins (and university 'homes') of many academics and commentators exploring the phenomenon. Hence, many studies adopt a primarily Western focus, exploring either the Western socio-cultural aspects of religious tourism to Christian holy shrines and sanctuaries or Western tourists' experiences when

engaging in various forms of religious tourism. Additionally, the literature focuses on the features of particular spiritual places or experiences that attract secular tourists, on shrines that function as both centres of worship and as tourism attractions reflecting a blend of ancient religious custom, architectural heritage and picturesque locations, and on locations where sacred commemorations or rituals are the main attraction. More specifically, a number of themes are evident in the Western focused literature, including:

- Western religious tourism and economic / business issues
- Western spirituality in religious tourism
- Experiences of secular tourists
- The meaning of authenticity in Western sacred locations
- The commercialisation of Western pilgrimage places

However, this is not to say, of course, that the literature is entirely Western focused; research has also focused on non-Western manifestations of religious tourism (for example, Haq & Jackson, 2008; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010) whilst researchers based in non-Western institutions are increasingly turning their attention to tourism in general (particularly in Asia), and to religious tourism in particular. Nevertheless, as revealed in the table in Appendix 3 (p.355) much of the academic literature has, to date, been based on a Western approach, whilst the table in Appendix 4 (p. 364) reveals the increasing extent of the non-Western literature. However, it must be acknowledged that much of the non-Western literature remains less academic, inasmuch as only a few journals are peer reviewed whilst most of the articles are from online newspapers, as well as some government reports the financial reports of different organisations.

The tables in Appendices 3 and 4 are not intended as exhaustive lists of the religious tourism and related literature. Rather, their purpose is to highlight the dominant focus and themes of the extant research into the phenomenon and, in particular, to emphasise the extent to which there exists a Western focus in the literature. A number of dominant themes, which were alluded to earlier in this chapter (Section 2.2), are evident in the literature, as follows:

1) Commodification of religious tourism (economic / business benefits)
Numerous government bureaucrats and tourism agencies perceive tourism as a way to save or strengthen struggling economies. In order to exploit the potential international capital available through tourism, countries, regions, and areas are pressured into

commodifying their unique religious building, culture, rituals, histories and natural environments to attract tourists and satisfy their demands for both new and unfamiliar experiences (Britton 1991; Young 1999). On the one hand, tourism may help to preserve ceremonies and rituals but, on the other hand it, it simultaneously commodifies sacred sites and customs. Numerous scholars and religious commentators have noted the negative influence of tourism on both the religiosity of local and international people and on religious ceremonies and rituals (de Sousa 1988, 1993; Holden 1988; Kirton 1990; Fish & Fish 1993). Additionally, religious built sites are commodified because religious groups commodify their dogmas, customs, and beliefs for economic gain. Shoval (2000) suggests that the theming and commodification of religion by governments and elements of the tourism industry discussed above have long been undertaken by religious groups at their religious sites. A more in-depth review of the literature regarding the commodification of religious tourism is presented in Chapter Three.

2) Management of religious tourism (specifically discovery, physical, cultural and education issues)

Because of the economic potential of religious tourism, religious places are being transformed into tourist locations by the marketing efforts of promotional agencies. This process alters the meaning of holy sites from that of worship and contemplation to that of leisure, in turn encouraging leisure- and education-oriented visitors and activities. This produces a 'convergence of a duality of place where religion and tourism overlap and mix with one another' (Bremer 2001: 3), raising questions pertaining to the management, maintenance, interpretation and meaning of sacred sites, particularly where they have become multi-use sites, acting as places of recreation, education, and leisure rather than strictly for religious purposes.

3) The development and the promotion of religious sites to boost tourism (expansion and marketing issues)

The interconnections of religion and promotion of religious products seem to be unavoidable in our culture, with some striking similarities. Religious people see religious products as a means of conveying their faith while sellers see them as a means of spreading faith. Religion and marketing institutions both depend on conveying a message and a willingness of people to believe in what is intellectually implausible. Through the means of rituals, practices and myths, religions create their meaning while promotions do the same through advertising and shopping. Similarly, religion is about accepting a belief system and marketing is accepting belief about a product. Religions have faith communities while marketing has brand communities.

Religion and marketing (promotion) have a symbiotic relationship, for example, religion is considered as a product and the products as religions (Einstein 2008: 75-78.). A more in-depth contemporary literature on the promotion of religious tourism products can be found in Chapter Three.

4) Pattern and activities and traits of religious tourist/pilgrim at religious location (design, actions and behavioural issues)

Cohen (1998: 7) suggests that tourism negatively influences the religiosity of people at tourist destinations, noting that tourism can lead to 'a weakening of the local adherence to religion and of the beliefs in the sacredness and efficacy of holy places, rituals, and customs'. Taken this quote into account, it could be argued that once tourism penetrates into a religious tourism location, it affects both the design of the destination and also the actions and behaviors of followers, which might jeopardies the principles of the religion and event.

Therefore, it must be emphasised that the predominant Western focus within the literature is not problematic. Although specific data do not exist, it is generally accepted that contemporary religious tourism comprises primarily Western tourists / pilgrims travelling either domestically or internationally to (Western) destination or events, although significant flows of religious tourists occur elsewhere, such as in India (Shinde, 2012) and, of course, Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the last decade has witnessed significant expansion of knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of religious tourism. Nevertheless, as the tables in Appendices 3 and 4 reveal, there is a need for more research into major non-Western form of religious tourism, such as the Hajj, as well as the specific issue of the commodification of religious tourism as it increasingly becomes the focus of economic development in religious tourism destination areas – hence the focus of this thesis.

2.8 Summary

As this chapter has discussed, it is logical to suggest that religious tourism was one of the earliest forms of tourism; indeed, it could be argued that the concept of travel for religious or spiritual purposes can be traced back to the very beginning of humanity. There is clear evidence of the link between religion and tourism and, throughout history; travel for religious purposes (and in most religions) has constantly increased whilst places of religious significance, often the destination for pilgrimages, have become not only a part of the cultural landscape but major players in the local and national economy. In the Western world, cities such as Rome continue to attract

millions of visitors on a yearly basis, whilst in the Middle East, Mecca and Jerusalem bot play a fundamental role as the hub of religious tourism activities.

Religious or faith-based tourism is a rapidly growing, major sector of contemporary tourism. As noted in the introduction, estimates of the scale of religious tourism suggest that up to 400 million visits are made to religious destinations annually, generating some US$18 billion. In all likelihood, however, this is likely to be a highly conservative estimate, particularly given the increasing scope of religious travel. Indeed, religious travel has broadened from its initial manifestation as pilgrimage into an activity embracing a variety of other religious-motivated form of travel, from missionary work to fellowship / cultural event attendance. Nevertheless, significant numbers still participate in pilgrimages, sometimes as a form of obligated travel as in the case of Muslims undertaking the Hajj, sometimes on a voluntary basis as a quest for personal fulfilment. Moreover, in modern Western (and allegedly increasingly secular) societies, the decline in adherence to traditional, institutionalised religious ideologies and practices and a consequential increase in the search for spiritual fulfilment through other paths and practices is endowing both the concept of spirituality and religious tourism with broader meaning, though this is not occurring in Islam in which spirituality is a fundamental element of the construct of religion and its institutions. In other words, Islam does not view 'spirituality' separately from everyday activities; in Islam, everything is 'spiritual' because all actions must be in accordance with Allah's pleasure.

Irrespective of varying interpretations of religious or faith-based tourism, its varying forms and functions and, indeed, what has been described as 'a shift in the sacred landscape' (Heelas, 1996: 2), particularly in modern Western societies, there is no doubt that religious tourism, however defined, is becoming an increasingly significant sector of worldwide tourism both in volume and value. Consequently, destinations are increasing seeking to exploit this valuable market, as is certainly the case with Mecca and the Hajj (see Chapter Four). Putting it another way, religious tourism is becoming increasingly commodified, yet limited research has been undertaken into the implications of this trend for meaning or authenticity of the pilgrim / religious tourist experience Thus, this thesis seeks to address this gap in knowledge through a study of contemporary pilgrims' experiences of Hajj. Moreover, given the focus of this thesis, there is evidently a need to review the related concepts of commodification and authenticity as the theoretical underpinning of the research. This is the purpose of the following chapter.

Chapter Three

Religious Tourism: Commodification and Authenticity

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the broader conceptual framework of this thesis, namely, the relationship between tourism and religion was discussed within the encompassing theme of spirituality. It was revealed that this relationship is both extensive and conceptually complex, particularly when divergent understandings of both religion and spirituality are taken into account. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that irrespective of definitions, not only is participation in religious tourism growing to the extent that it is now considered a major sector of tourism worldwide, but also that many destinations have recognised and are responding to the economic potential of the religious tourism market. In particular, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), as noted in the introduction to this thesis and as will be considered in more detail in Chapter Four, has invested heavily in services, facilities and infrastructure to support further development of the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Moreover, as will also be discussed in Chapter Four, pilgrims participating in the Hajj are, by and large, only able to do so by purchasing what is, in practice, a 'packaged' experience (comprising transport, accommodation and additional services). This promotion of, investment in and packaging of religious tourism is, as a consequence, creating the conditions for the commodification of religion and the religious tourism experience, hence the focus of this thesis. There is, then, a need to review critically the notion of the commodification of religious tourism as a conceptual foundation for the empirical research in this study.

It has long been suggested that the development of tourism inevitably results in some degree of cultural transformation in the destination (Wall & Mathieson, 2006; Smith, 1989). Indeed, a number of early texts that questioned the alleged benefits of tourism highlighted its negative consequences on destination societies and cultures (de Kadt, 1979; Mathieson & Wall, 1986: Rosenow & Pulsipher, 1979; Young, 1973). This is not to say that tourism alone can influence the nature and direction of social and cultural change amongst destination communities; all cultures are dynamic and liable to change over time, with or without the influence of tourism (Meethan, 2010; Sharpley, 2008; Wood, 1980). More specifically, the alleged process of globalisation, or the emergence of 'a world which, due to many politico-economic, technological and informational advancements and developments, is on its way to becoming borderless and an interdependent whole' (Wahab & Cooper, 2001: 4) is arguably having a far

greater influence on cultural change than tourism, although tourism is clearly part of that process (Fayos-Solà & Bueno, 2001). Nevertheless, the intrusion of tourism is likely to impact on the values, lifestyles and customs of destination communities, both generally through a processes of acculturation, or the manifestation of the phenomenon of 'when two cultures come into contact of any duration, each becomes somewhat like the other through a process of borrowing' (Nuñez, 1989: 266), and in particular through the manner in which cultural expressions are adapted, produced or performed for the specific purpose of being sold to tourists. Usefully, Wall and Mathieson (2006: 262) identify three major forms of culture which attract tourists and are, hence, susceptible to such adaptation:

i.   Inanimate forms of culture, such as historical buildings and monuments or traditional arts and crafts.
ii. Forms of culture which are reflected in the normal, day-to-day life and activities of people in destination societies.
iii. Animate forms of culture, involving the participation of people, such as religious events, carnivals, and traditional festivals.

Two points are of significance here. First, where forms of culture become adapted for sale to or consumption by tourists, they become a product; specifically, they become a commodity with an exchange (usually financial) value. And second, through becoming commodities, or what Cohen (1988) refers to as the process of 'commoditization', these forms of culture lose their meaning or original purpose. In other words, they lose their authenticity; they become inauthentic, as potentially might the experience of either their producers or performers and of the tourists consuming them.

There are, then, two elements to the process in which culture in general and, in the context of this thesis, religious tourism, pilgrimage and the Hajj in particular as a specific expressions of animate culture, become transformed by tourism: first, the process by which they become a commodity in the first place and, second, the consequential impacts on the authentic experience of those producing and consuming them. Moreover, they are of particular relevance to this thesis given that not only is the Hajj evidently becoming commodified, as summarised in Chapter One and detailed in Chapter Four, but also pilgrims undertaking the Hajj are, in a sense both producers / performers and consumers of the Hajj 'product'. The Hajj would, by definition, not exist without pilgrims who perform it, but those who participate consume both specific products and services as well as the overall experience – hence, the aim of this thesis to explore the extent to which the spiritual experience of the Hajj is being transformed

into an inauthentic touristic experience. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to review the concepts of both commodification and authenticity, particularly as related to religious tourism, though the first task is to define and justify the term 'commodification' as used in this thesis.

3.2 Commoditisation or Commodification?

In the tourism literature, the terms 'commoditisation and commodification' are used interchangeably. For example, Cohen (1988) refers to 'commoditisation' as a process in which cultural objects and actions or performances come to be assessed mainly in terms of their exchange value. More specifically, they are located within a commercial or business touristic framework and, thus, become commodities (goods and services); they are produced and sold within an established exchange system in which their exchange value is stated in terms of prices determined by the market. Along similar lines, Santoso (2010: 102) argues that commoditisation is not an unusual phenomenon in the daily tourism encounter. Doing anything in tourism is parallel to doing business. From the tourism industry perspective, tourism businesses pursue their aims in the same way as businesses in any other sector (Sharpley, 2009); goods, services and experiences are produced and sold in order to make a profit. From the tourist's perspective, tourism products and services are purchased or consumed in the expectation of receiving particular benefits or to meet particular needs (Mansfeld, 1992; Mill & Morrison, 1985) at prices they consider appropriate. Expressing differently, both the tourist and the tourism business are engaged in the process of the exchange of commodities based on their exchange value (more simply put, engaging in trading); and both are seeking to maximise their gains, the tourist their experience, the business their profit (Clarke, 2013:50-51).

At the same time, the concept of commodification, as opposed to commoditisation, has become increasingly utilised in the tourism literature, (for example, Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003; Cloke & Perkins, 2002; McLeod, 2006; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Williams & Baláž, 2001). In many respects, commodification is used and interpreted in a similar way to commoditisation, as the process by which cultural products and performances are accorded an exchange (financial) value and hence become commodities.

However, according to Rushkoff (2017), a distinction exists between the two terms. On the one hand, commodification refers to the way in which the cultural or social value of something is replaced with a market (economic) value; that 'something' could be a good, a service or, indeed, a communal system or institution, such as religion. On the

other hand, commoditisation, according to Rushkoff (2017) refers 'specifically to the way that goods that used to be distinguishable in terms of attributes end up becoming mere commodities in the eyes of the market or consumers'. That is, a good or a service (implicitly, already measured in terms of its economic value) with a distinguishing brand, name or set of specific attributes is commoditised when it becomes indistinguishable from other similar products. To an extent, of course, any semantic distinction between 'commodification' and 'commoditisation' may be considered irrelevant; both are concerned with the manner in which products or experiences are accorded an exchange value and, in the context of this thesis, become a tourism commodity. Nevertheless, whilst 'commoditisation' refers to the transformation of an exclusive product into a simple commodity, commodification arguably embraces a more complex process in which the social or cultural values of a product, institution or, indeed, experience are not only accorded a monetary value but are also appropriated for broader purposes. For example, Philip and Mercer (1999: 39-40), writing in the late 1990s, suggest that 'the major [Buddhist] religious cultural sites [in Burma] have been recognized by the military regime as possessing immense economic value, and as a consequence, are being exploited for their tourism potential … [but]… have also been appropriated to fulfil the ideological objectives of the military regime'. In short, they argue that Buddhism was commodified.

For this reason, the term 'commodification' is adopted in this thesis. More specifically, the development and commercialisation of products and services related to the Hajj is more than simply according them an exchange value. Not only have the social and cultural values of the Hajj as a religious ritual been given a monetary value from both a supply and demand perspective, hence potentially transforming the meaning for both producers and consumers (pilgrims), but also the Hajj has been endowed with a wider economic developmental role. At the same time, it should be noted that the use of the term commodification in this thesis also reflects its wider application in the study of the relationship between religion and contemporary consumer societies (for example, Kitiarsa, 2010). Hence, the use of the term here also reflects is wider acceptance in the literature.

The commodification of religion in general is considered shortly. However, by way of introduction to that discussion, it is useful to review briefly the extent to which religion is more simply commoditised; although religion may be thought of as a set of rituals, beliefs and doctrines, it has long been associated with an element of commercialisation evident in the sale of religious artefacts to pilgrims or devotees whilst, as Shi (2011:207-208) observes, 'in addition to the official religious items and

relics that have been sold for centuries, innovative entrepreneurs and retailers also produce devotional items and other various articles [including] physical fragments of religious sites, such as bottled water from Lourdes, boxes containing earth from the Mount of Olives, or cans filled with Holy Land air' (see also Shackley, 2001, 2006). The next section, therefore, considers commoditisation and religion, identifying how religion becomes the platform for business and, consequently, becomes the commodity. Subsequently, the discussion then turns to an exploration of how and why religious commodification has become visible and evident across major religious traditions, and how religious commodification may impact on the spiritual experience of pilgrims.

3.2.1 Commoditisation and religion

As already observed, the term 'commoditisation' can be understood and applied in different ways. For example, for Dumlupinar (2010: 101), commoditisation refers to a situation where a business's goods and services are very similar in character and price to its competitors' goods and services, whereas Appadurai (1986: 6) argues that commoditisation is simply the process in which goods and actions come to be assessed initially in relation to their exchange value and, thus become commodities. In addition, commoditisation may also be considered from a sociological perspective (Kopytoff, 1986); from this view, commoditisation is a process where products become more exchangeable in a system characterised by the presence of other products that are seemingly different. These products or commodities have 'use value and exchange value' (Kopytoff, 1986: 64).

Within the particular context of religion, Bremer (2006) points to four concerns that, he argues, are shared by both tourists and religious adherents, the first three emphasising the significance of the fourth, commoditisation, which is of course the specific focus of this study. First, Bremer (2006: 3) observes that both tourists and religious adherents 'demonstrate a concern for space and maintain a deep attachment to special places'. That is, certain touristic and religious places hold significant meanings for tourists / religious adherents. Second, there is an articulation of identities; 'in fact, the making of the place always involves the making of identities, and, conversely, the construction of the identities always involved the construction of place' (Bremer, 2006: 4-5). A third feature is a pervasive concern with aesthetics: 'Tourism involves a thoroughgoing aestheticisation of the world. Tourists everywhere regard much of what they encounter in terms of beautiful, the uplifting, and the edifying (Bremer, 2001: 5). Indeed, according to Bremer, one of the tourist's prime worries is concerned with authenticity as an aesthetic quality; he notes that '[t]he touristic concern for authenticity also frames travellers' experiences of religion' (Bremer, 2006: 6). And fourth, Bremer introduces the

issue of 'commoditisation'; 'all things, all places, all experiences, become potential commodities in the tourist economy [and] religion is no exception' (Bremer, 2006: 6).

However, it remains unclear what these mutually shared concerns reveal either about religion or tourism per se, or about their specific interrelations with commoditisation in particular. Hence, the purpose of this section is to explore critically the relationship between commoditisation and religion, asking what are the implications for the meaning or significance of religion and religious rituals, practices and goods once they become commoditised, predominantly under the umbrella of tourism?

Generally speaking, there is nothing unusual about commoditisation within daily tourism engagements; performing tourism is parallel to doing business. As has long been recognised in the literature, encounters or interactions between tourists and 'hosts' typically occur within a context of commercial exchange (de Kadt, 1979; Krippendorf, 1987; Sharpley, 2014), to the extent that Canziani and Francioni (2013: 20) suggest that 'tourist' and 'host' are better described as 'customer' and 'service provider'. In other words, the way in which tourists/pilgrims pursue their goal is quite similar to the way a businessman pursues theirs; both parties encounter the notion of exchange, which can superficially be referred to as trading. Moreover, both parties operate along the same line of thought, attempting to optimise advantages and minimise risks (Ap, 1992). The notion of commoditisation refers specifically to optimising a deal within the process of exchange. In a purely business context, for example, the tourist/pilgrim engaging in an exchange hopes to achieve the best experience at an acceptable cost; the businessman, conversely, hopes to optimise his profit. Indeed, in this analysis, commoditisation necessarily refers to financial profit, (Santoso, 2010). Tourism actors (tourists/pilgrims) may be willing to sacrifice some advantage (e.g. pay more) in the expectation of a better experience, whilst both tourist/pilgrim and businessman will strive to ensure that the deal they commit is to eventually to their advantage, hence avoiding sense of vulnerability (Ateljevic et al., 2003). In short, commoditisation is, so to speak, is a legitimate action and an analysis of the way tourists/pilgrims engage in this rational process in tourism would reveal numerous examples commoditisation. Nonetheless, it is important to bear several points in mind (Kristen, 1991).

First, commoditisation may not always be apparent, it only being evident in the deployment of rational behaviour or, more precisely, means-end rationality. Second, the object of commoditisation in this regard may not necessarily be physical. It could, for example, be an abstract thing such as collective identity, a primordial relationship or

a religious affiliation. Third, commoditisation is not merely derived from the tourist's rationality in approaching the emerging opportunities or risk but is also structured by the prevailing social institutional arrangements. Explaining it more clearly, action is purposive and rational to the extent that tourists / pilgrims have some degree of understanding of the social context within which the exchange is occurring. For example, Reisinger and Turner (2003) argue that tourist-host exchanges occur within a liminal 'tourism culture' which is not only recognised but conditions expectations and behavior. And fourth, commoditisation is closely associated with the prevailing competitive context. For instance, the need to optimise numbers at a religious event may encourage governments to rally popular support through mobilising primordial sentiment. In this regard, religious sentiment is traded with tourism promotional activities. Thus, it becomes evident that commoditisation means making better use of anything at one's disposal and, within the context of religious tourism in particular, the increasing penetration of the market into the tourist / pilgrim's life make commoditisation difficult to avoid (Santoso, 2010).

It could be argued, therefore, that religion has now become a product and it is no different from other commodities sold in the consumer market (Einstein, 2008: 4); whilst the inherent passion of religious messages is not new, the (business) promotion religion is (Finke & Lannaccone, 1993; Moore, 1994). Indeed, there is an evidence of a growing and more demanding religious middle class seeking a pilgrimage that is more comfortable, more luxurious. Religion is now an opportunity to be exploited by numerous industries, businesses and markets around the world, and religious tourism in particular has become an industry deeply influenced by the process of commoditisation (Lannaccone , 1991; Einstein, 2008; Francesconi, 2009; Haq et al., 2009; Kale, 2004; (Sizer ,1999). The production of souvenirs and luxury amenities as commodities in religious tourism is a good example; these are material commodities that are manufactured, customised, marketed and sold, they are exchange goods with a value in the market. As with other goods, the supply of souvenirs and luxury amenities is planned through supply chains (Coles, 2004) from their place of fabrication and packaging, through transhipment and supply, to selling by merchants and other sellers, and finally to consumption by tourist/pilgrim (Cai, Leung, & Mak, 2006; Timothy & Wall, 1997). The supply chain represents the flow of goods from point of production to point of customisation, to consumer-pilgrim/tourist who derives personal benefits from the object and the experiences it represents. Thus, commoditisation and religion are intertwined within the context of religious tourism, as religion and its rituals became a commodity.

Adopting a middle ground-position Einstein (2008: 12-14) reflects on the crucial relationship between religion and commoditisation. Specifically, she explores how religion has adopted the logic of commoditisation and has built its moral and spiritual empires based on the principles of the market and the commoditisation model, arguing that the principal religion, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have always branded themselves as consumption packages to compete within the global religious marketplace. Putting it more simply, different religions compete within global religious market places, seeking competitive advantage through commoditisation; France, Italy, Jerusalem and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are good examples (Ward, 2006:184). Along similar lines MacCannell (1995) notes that the holy and profane have not been reciprocally noble, whether from a production or consumption perspective. That is, consumers see religious goods as a bridge to articulate their faith, whilst producers / suppliers perceive goods related to religious practice is a bridge to spread the faith (and a source of income). Yet, although the market is religion and God is a new economy, it is the spiritual that contributes to the consumption process (DeChant, 2002: 28) and, hence, religion and commoditisation have much in common, both manufacturing demands, desires and values (Twitchell, 2004: 65). Consumers trust products that satisfy them, just as they want to believe that religion will. Therefore, when religion is commoditised, it performs like other products. So, it can be argued that religion is both a commodity and a tool of commoditisation and, consequently, religion being used as a strategy for the exchanging of values, both economic and spiritual (Cimino et al., 1998; Haq & Wong, 2010).

The above discussion suggests that religion and commoditisation are comprehensive, wide-ranging and multifaceted historical and religious-cultural phenomena. The term 'commoditisation' itself suggests sets of decisive acts designed to transform religious symbols and institutions into marketable and consumable commodities, albeit with the aim of profit and other forms of material gain carefully packaged and subtly placed beneath. Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, religious commoditisation is understood as an emerging multidimensional marketing process which transforms a religious faith or tradition into consumable and marketable possessions. It is an interactive and iterative relationship between religion and market, at the same time involving both the market forces commoditising religion and the religious institutions engaging with the marketplace and consuming culture (Moore, 1994).

The process of commoditisation in religious tourism relies on storytelling, meaning creation, and an inclination of the public to trust in what is logically implausible. Religions generate connotation via mythologies, rites and performance, whereas

commoditisation generates connotation via exchange values, commodities and spending. Religion is the approval of a trust structure, whereas commoditisation is trust regarding goods. Consumers have faith in religion and also believe in the commoditisation process to fulfil their religious wants and needs in exchange of values, (Einstein, 2008: 78). Consequently, religion has become a commodity and although commoditisation does not essentially abolish the meaning of religious goods, it may transform it add new significance and meaning (Cohen, 1988).

Once commoditisation transforms or enhances the connotation of religious goods or adds new meanings to existing ones, the process of commodification (as opposed to commoditisation) takes place. Therefore, the next part of this chapter reviews how religion, pilgrims and destinations are affected by it in the context of religious tourism.

3.2.2 Religion and commodification

The commodification of religion refers to religious symbols becoming commodities. It is a process of recontextualisation of religious symbols, language, and ideas from their original religious context to the media and consumer culture. In this process, religious symbols become commodities, objects of consumption readily available in the supermarket of religion and the media landscape. The commodification of religion works on several levels. The two most obvious are the (often commercial) offers of blessings, prayers and so on through the purchase of religious artifacts, books and other material products. The second important – and obvious – level is the attachment of religious values through a religious aesthetic to consumer products. Often, the commodification of religion is related to a loss of power to shape religious practices (Ornella, 2013).

Religious commodification, or the commodification of religion, is not specific to the modern or postmodern religious context. Reflecting the more general development of socioeconomic life, commodification has long been in evidence in the human religious experience, from pre-modern to modern times. Indeed, commodification has been a fundamental element of the events and rituals through which religiosity is expressed and which have become progressively planned and organised in religio-cultural world (Moore, 1994: 4). Putting it another way, religious commodification is undeniably a practice with a long history, and is evidence of the dependence of the religious leadership within communities on socioeconomic power and other material support to attract and respond to the religious demands of the masses. In short, religion cannot flourish without monetary and other sound material foundations (Marranci, 2010: 566).

The birth and growth of all faiths have from the outset involved various methods and degrees of religious commodification although, according to Moore (1994: 5), the 'growing worldliness of religion' has been more apparent and has been more directly influenced by socioeconomic and cultural forces over the last two centuries, particularly in societies where public religious adherence has declined significantly, especially in western America (Berger 1999; Berger et al., 2008; Twitchell, 2004). Similarly, Ward (2003: 185) proposes that religious commodification is nothing new. Many of the great ancient churches and other religious places in Europe, such as Assisi, the birthplace of St. Francis, and the Basilica della Santa Casa, (the basilica in which the Holy House in which the Blessed Virgin Mary is believed to have lived) in Loreto, both in Italy, the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela in Spain, and places in other parts of the world, such as Mecca in Saudi Arabia, were built on the funds (donations) related to the commodification of religion. However, once commodification takes place in religious tourism, it pushes society and locations towards the materialistic realm of marketing – selling its tangible and intangible cultural elements (Gretzel et al., 2006). Primarily, commodification threatens identity building and culture and turns them into economic profits. Secondly, commodification provides conditions for domestic investors to increase their capacity to produce more economic opportunities (Britton, 1991). Moreover, it is probably true to say that religious commodification is part and parcel of the contemporary world (Maher, 2012).

Arguably, religion has always been connected and intertwined with external forces, particularly the administration/government and the market; as Strasser (2003: 3) observes, 'there is no limit to the reach of the commodity relationship, and implicitly asking whether everything, indeed, can be commodified'. When a religion is commodified through its relationships with the contemporary market, it is perhaps evidence of the fact that the religious community is willing to adjust itself to wider socio-economic transformations changes. Indeed, most religious traditions are capable of modernising themselves. More than three decades ago, Bellah (1970: 72) reminded us that 'it has been impossible for religion to remain entirely indifferent to modernisation'. In the south-east Asian context in the same era, Alatas (1970: 270) similarly asserted that 'in the case of the great world religions such as Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism … one can suggest that in some places they are neutral, in some places they encourage, but nowhere do they hinder modernisation and economic development'. In the second decade of the 21st Century, this argument appears very much appropriate to most religious traditions across the world, hence pointing to the need for a more in-depth critical discussion that considers the reasons for the commodification of religion.

3.2.2.1 Reasons for the commodification of religion

There are three principal questions that can be posed as a basis for discussing the factors underpinning the commodification of religion:

i.   What constitutes religious commodities? This question demands some detailed description of actual religious goods available every day in the religious marketplaces.

ii.   How is a religion transformed into sets of marketable commodities? This question requires an exploration of the processes and forces that transform or renovate certain element of religion into commodities.

iii.   Why is the commodification of religion important in comprehending late modern or postmodern religiosity? This final question points to the need for a clarification of the position of religious commodification in the contemporary world.

In addressing the first question, a number of points can be made, not least that religious goods (and experiences) can be regarded like any other commodity – they are things that are paid in the expectation of some benefit, to satisfy a particular religious (or, indeed, religious tourism) need. In other words, religious commodities are bought in much the same way as any other good or service. Religious products can be characterised into several groups based on their corporeal, cultural, institutional and emblematic properties, but mostly share characteristics with other economically-commodified products, such as scarcity value with high prices such as antique statues, pictures and pieces of art (Shepherd, 2002: 188). Some religious commodities are embracing both use and exchange values; some may be goods and services aimed at mass markets, such souvenirs and religious tour packages. Others may be fetishized products, such as amulets and talisman, which are produced and sold through special sacralised rituals and marketing procedures. Religious commodities may, however, possess some unique features which set them apart from other general consumer commodities (Marranci, 2010: 570).

First, religious commodities tend to be narrowly related to holy profiles of the creators of the faith, to major historic religious events, or to particular places. For example, historic locations, buildings and events significant to the beliefs followers can become major attractions; they can be easily 'spun' into pilgrimage destinations and tourist attractions. Second, many religious commodities are typically fashioned, controlled, and operated institutionally by particular religious associations. Religious goods are the products of organised efforts, and institutionalisation is one of the powerful gears in

religious branding, advertising and marketing. It guarantees historical authenticity and, perhaps, rouses candid emotion and devotion (Chhabra, 2010). In reality, 'churches, synagogues, temples and mosques play an important role in the way every religion is shaped, even for people who are not in them (Ammerman, 2007: 8). Third, religious commodities may be endowed with symbolic connotations or a holy quality, a sacredness; as Berger (1969: 26) expresses, 'sacred as a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience'. Therefore, it is this sacred quality that distinguishes a religious commodity from more common, everyday objects. More specifically, religious commodities may convey or possess authoritative religious messages that create a sense of religious membership and identity; hence, religious goods become worship-able religious icons, particularly those related to significant personalities or deities. Moreover, the producers or sellers may themselves believe the play an influential role in, in a sense, transmitting spiritual messages or supernatural sentiments.

And fourth, religious commodities are predominantly promoted via public events such as festivals or through religious tourism more generally. Thus, the manufacture, marketing and consumption of religious goods are basic features of popular religion. Publicly manageable religious events reveal the effective use of religious goods. They have become infrequent markets, where the buying, selling and exchange of religious commodities actually take place. Public events not only bring manufacturers, sellers, and consumers together, but also create a mood and atmosphere which promotes business exchange in the names of the revered and the sacred and the desire to expressing one's religious identity (Kitiarsa, 2008: 11).

Importantly, however, in addition to the production of tangible religious tourism goods, non-tangible products, such as a spiritual experience, have also become a commodity. For instance, Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad Rumi (September, 30 1207 – December, 17 1273), known more popularly in the English-speaking world simply as Rumi, was a Persian poet, jurist, theologian, and Sufi mystic. Rumi's poems have been widely translated into many of the world's languages. In recent years, Western interest in, and appreciation for, Rumi's writings have grown enormously – so much so that Rumi has been described as the 'Best-selling poet in US (Ciabattari, 2014). As a consequence, many Americans have started to visit his shrine in Konya, Turkey, in search of spiritual experience in his poetry and in performing the Sufi folk dance, circling hours and hours to divine music and Rumi's poems. However even this spiritual experience has become a commodity as pilgrims visiting Rumi's shrine have to pay to see his grave (Rustom 2008: 4). Similarly, Pigott (2010) notes that almost 100,000 British Muslim pilgrims

undertook the Islamic religious journeys of the Hajj and Umrah in 2010. However, many more thousands were unable to, thus not benefitting from the spiritual experience, primarily because former inexpensive hotels in Mecca have been replaced by branded, higher quality and hence, expensive ones, leading to the perception that Hajj and Umrah are becoming a commodity for consumption only by wealthier individuals. Moreover, even if undertaking the Hajj is affordable, a bottle of the holy Zam Zam water to be brought back for friends and family so that they can also experience its divine spiritual taste of the holy water can only be acquired at a price – it, too, has been commodified.

From a Western perspective, it is the same story. For example, the Vatican City area is not exempt from entry fees whilst, in the UK, many cathedrals have imposed entry charges; in 2017 a single adult ticket into St Pauls Cathedral in London cost £18, for Canterbury cathedral £12.50. Once inside, in some there are further opportunities to spend money in gift shops and tea rooms. Interestingly, in 2017 those cathedrals charging entry fees suffered a 12% fall in visitor numbers, whilst those with no entry fee, such as Durham Cathedral and Ripon Cathedral, experienced good growth (Rudgard, 2017).

Finally, religious commodities are directed to the public through mass media. In contemporary societies around the globe, publicly accessible media, such as TV, radio, newspaper, or internet are employed as vehicles to advertise religious goods to mass society. With the power of mass media, religious goods are the most important part of what Ammerman (2007:11) calls 'everyday religion'.

With regards to the second question, which is concerned with methods or strategies employed in the creation of particular religious commodities, research into contemporary commodification across the main religious civilisations (Einstein, 2008; Henn, 2008; Jackson, 1999a, 1999b; Smith, 2001; Twitchell, 2004; Wiegele, 2005; Wilson, 2008, Ronwanien, 1996) has revealed the following methods:

i.   manufacturing and marketing religious goods with specific emphasis on charismatic and astonishing management;
ii.   corporate religious publishing;
iii. broadcasting religious messages and shows via mass media, including television, radio, newspapers, internet, and other online media;
iv.   commercial film, sport, and other forms of popular culture;
v.   developing pilgrimage and religious tourism;

vi.   adopting contemporary business/market strategies, as undertaken by mega churches or mega mosques and other wealth theology and sects.

Whilst this is not an exhaustive list of the methods and strategies employed in religious commodification, it nevertheless represents the principal ways in which the commodification of religion is occurring in in contemporary societies. Therefore, it could be argued that the extensive marketing methods of religiosity underpin the impression that 'religion is everywhere' and that religion in the market of tourism has become an ordinary commodity (Moore, 1994: 256).

The above evidence regarding what constitutes religious commodification and how religion is transformed into a set of marketable commodities leads to the third and final question: why is religious commodification important in understanding late modern or postmodern religiosity? In addressing this question, Davie (2007: 144) proposes that two types of the holy probability arise in postmodern times: one that affirms disintegrations and one that creates islands of security. She asks: 'What are the forms of the sacred most likely to flourish in late modernity and how can their relative success be explained? … Two possibilities emerged in this respect: on the one hand, the types of religion that followed or affirmed the fragmentation of late modern societies, including the many different manifestations of the new age; and on the other, the forms of religion that create islands of security with the uncertainties of rapid economic, social and cultural change, including a tendency towards fundamentalism' (Davie, 2007: 144).

According to Davie (2007), religious commodification is related to nurturing religious dogma and practices which follow or affirm postmodern vagueness and disintegration. Indeed, by the late twentieth century, the modernist focus on 'tension between religious faith and modern Western rationality' (Kurtz,1995: 7) had become less pertinent, with religious commodification directing people towards to routine practices and human experiences within contemporary socio-cultural circumstances often described as dynamic and dislocating. Commodification unlocks space of faith and redefines landscapes of practice in which people hold more relevant and consumable religious messages and goods with the assistance of technologies which fit their lifestyle. Moreover, it builds on the premise of consumers seeking identity and pleasure within a dominant consumer culture (Lury, 2011). As Bauman (1998: 69) suggests, 'in the postmodern era, consumer-oriented society, individuals are socially formed under the patronage of the pleasure-seeker or sensation-gatherer role instead of the producer/soldier role formative for the great majority of society members ….in the modern era' (Bauman 1998: 68-69). Religious commodification nurtures on the fertile

soil of consumerism; it is facilitated by the market means of exchange and consumption, and it is reshaped to meet the ethical and religious needs of postmodern social life in which people's religious piety and religiosity are radically different from previous generations (Mbaiwa, 2011: 292). At the same time, religious commodification is based on the premise on market-religion convergence; in this context religious commodification is a joint creation by religious institutions, market forces, and demands from consumer-cum-religious pleasure and identity seekers.

In her book *Branding Faiths;* Mara Einstein (2008) poses a number of interesting questions, such as: why is religious shopping an increasing trend? Why are megachurches so popular? How has marketing played a part in this, and why is religious marketing proliferating now? Her answers to these questions can be summarised as: (i) religion is a product; (ii) religious products … have become branded in much the same way that consumer products have been branded. Religious organisations have taken on names, logos or personalities, and slogans that allow them to be heard in a cluttered, increasingly competitive marketplace' (Einstein, 2007: 11); (iii) there is a high level of media saturation; and (iv), people as religious consumers have more freedom to choose the religion of their choice. Religious commodification grows out of the market-religion connection, the two being arguably more closely related than might be imagined. For instance, Mel Gibson's film *Passion of the Christ* was produced for a targeted audience, and was promoted by heavy advertisement yet, although while the principle objective was to sell the movie, the director claims that his ultimate objective was to promote religion. The reason why *The Passion of the Christ* is significant is that it emphasises the argument that although religious exercise is increasingly privatised, religious promotion and advertising has become widely accepted within contemporary culture (Einstein, 2008: 4).

Additionally, Hasan (2009) observes that religion no longer seems to be simply a set of rites, beliefs, doctrines and dogmas, but also an emblematic commodity relevant to particular social groups' demands for lifestyle, modesty and gratification. From a sociological perspective, consumption in the contemporary age is hypothesised as one of the most vital, defining experiences of class, whilst it is also a manifestation of individuality and a symbol of the self (Mathur, 2014). This is connected to the idea of personification which recommends that 'all the basic procedures of conception, perception, evaluation and judgement are linked to the reality that human beings are personified social agents' (Turner, 1994). Since religion has arguably emerged as a symbol of exclusiveness related to success, a declaration of one's personal identity can involve the use and consumption of religious symbols, as occurred within Christianity,

Islam and other mainstream religions, in which, for example, the Hajj or the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela have become commodified symbols conforming with social status.

Conversely, however, Miller (2004) suggests that the commodification of religion has condensed religious beliefs, symbols and values into free-floating signifiers to be consumed like anything else. As such, it removes them from their authentic contexts and immerses them into a tourism market where they can be narrowly comprised but not put into practice. Thus, religious commodification is not only a phenomenon that exists exclusively to make money; it also involves ideologisation (values) of commodities and commoditisation of religion, as it is as much about selling ideology as it is about selling products (Lukens-Bull, 2008).

Generally, the commodification of religion through ideologies, doctrines, customs and beliefs for economic gain is now common. The theming and commodification of religion is now widespread, but not necessarily new. For example, in the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church became a vast economic organisation through the selling of religious artefacts and indulgences (Shoval, 2000: 259). Today, it is difficult to find a religious site that has not become, to a greater or lesser extent, the 'victim' of commodification in the pursuit of economic gain. Owing to increasing interest in and demand for travel to religious sites, as mentioned earlier, many religious faiths are exploiting their followers in the shape of different tour packages or fees to enter the site. In addition, many religious faiths have developed ritual economies of exchange, which are connected with mandatory visits to sacred sites to practise religion (Koskansky 2002: 379). These religions which emphasise a mandatory obligation to visit sacred sites commodify and theme themselves as authentic. Mol (1983) and Jurkovich and Gesler (1997: 449) contend that these religions reinforce identity by creating rituals to be attended and through the creation of myths. To gain and retain adherents, religious faiths must be seen as authentic or 'true religion' (Olsen, 2003: 100). As Bremer (2001: 4) states 'the question of authentic religious experience has been a constant theme in claims to religious authority. To some extent, all of these debates over 'true religion' and authentic experience participate in discourses on authenticity that provide standards for and authorise their claims'.

While commodification is frequently understood to be authentic within an economic context, Waitt (2000) proposes that in general it is a device that can be used to convey particular messages. By extension, this suggests that religious establishments or institutions may not only limit the range of explanations or messages at a religious

place, but also endorse particular messages. For example, if religious faiths view visitors as potential converts, the messages depicted at a location might focus on distinguishing between diverse faiths, promoting one above the other as 'true' or 'more authentic' than another. Alternatively, religious faiths that are more concerned about outreach may place more emphasis on creating a 'spiritual 'atmosphere through aesthetics and the encouragement to pray. Therefore, the method of commodification or packaging of religion at particular religious places will depend on the visitor market a religious group wants to target (Olsen, 2003).Putting it another way, there is a political / power dimension to the commodification of religion (Olsen, 2003).Therefore, religious commodification plays a significant role in the way religion is packaged and accessible to a wider audience and how this has served to produce a framework for the moral order of society through the objectification and systematisation of religious values and practices as an established model.

Thus far in this chapter, it has been argued that around the world and across different faiths, religion has become a vast business, commencing with the commoditisation process taken over by commodification, subsequently traded by material commodities; in turn, social identities are altered in to modernisation (Clement et al., 2014). However, it is finally important to explore how the commodification of religious tourism is manifested in new dimensions within the context of tourism, thus adding further to understanding how religion is becoming commodified through religious tourism.

3.2.3 New Age, commodification and religious tourism

Some commentators adopt a different perspective on the commodification of religion, (for example, Einstein, 2008; York, 2001). Concurring with others that, in the contemporary era, religion in no longer defined by a set of public rituals and practices but, rather has become privatised (Pargament, 1999), they suggest religion and piety has entered a 'New Age' (Drury, 2004) sometimes called individualisation of religion. Moreover, within this New Age, they identify what they consider to be the wholesale commodification of religion, noting in particular the selling-off of religious buildings, services and experiences (and hence access to 'authentic service) to commercially-based operations which advertise and promote a specific view of and approach of life, a phenomenon they refer to religious corporate capitalism. In the US, such a process has been termed the disorganization of religion:

> America's smaller, community-driven Little Rectangular Churches are being
> steadily replaced by her entrepreneurial, consumer-oriented Big Round
> Churches. Authority once wielded by religious denominations is being replaced

by the entertaining magnetism of a charismatic pastor, attracting a hardened remnant of fundamentalist believers unconcerned about the moral implications of commercialized faith. As community ties and social capital steadily weaken, Organized Religion is losing ground to Disorganized Religion.

It's not hard to appreciate the appeal of the Big Round Church compared to the older, community-driven models. How convenient would it be to visit for a church service, be entertained by elite professionals, pay your fee for spiritual services rendered, and just leave? Disorganized Religion replaces traditional religious identities and their accompanying entanglements and authority structures with a model in which the customer is always right (Ladd, 2017).

To explain the concept of religious corporate capitalism, religion can be thought of as company being taken over by a corporate capitalist. In order to improve the efficiency and profitability of the company it has taken over, the corporate capitalist repackages and rebrands the company's physical and cultural resources which are then sold in the market of tourism experiences. On the one hand, this may maintain the atmosphere or authenticity of religious custom (business language 'the goodwill' of the corporation); on the other hand, rebranding removes any negative connotations of 'religion' within a contemporary secular framework (Woodhead et al., 2000: 262).

Alternatively stated, it may be argued that religion and religious rituals are available for sale. Similar to corporate take-overs and consolidations in the private sector in contemporary neoliberal economies, the physical and cultural assets of mainstream religions customs are, arguably, being acquired and sold off as commodities. Religions are, in a sense, facing a coup from the corporate world and, as a consequence, this commodification of religion may potentially lead to a distinction between poor and rich tourist/s pilgrims. That is, participation in religious rituals traditionally served as a leveller, transcending race, ethnicity, nationality and economic backgrounds, yet it has now come to be defined by luxury, commodification and profit as the fundamental characteristics of religious journeys (Garuda, 2010).

Thus, from the above it could be suggested that religious events and practices now have less connection with 'God' and a greater focus on contemporary commodities and consumption, as pilgrims / tourists become attracted more by the satisfaction of social and material needs than of spiritual / religious needs. Moreover, this acceptance of the commodification of religion has facilitated the corporate takeover of religious tourism as evidenced, for example, in the manner in which the Saudi government is participating in and encouraging the commodification Mecca and Hajj (see Chapter Four); indeed,

governments exploit sacred destinations and religious customs and rituals as means of marketing their own socio-political-economic corporate values. In that process, the pilgrim becomes a consumer of competing brand-names and luxury services, whilst religious philosophies and practices become commodities for sale to compensate for the contemporary, isolated spirituality of religion and its rituals.

Yet the question remains: why are governments keen to commodify religion, religious destinations and religious products in a contemporary branded manner, at a level never before seen in past? Quite evidently, the answer lies partly in the economic development benefits that accrue from religious tourism, a market that, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, continues to grow in both scale and scope. At the same time, however, the answer perhaps also lies in a trend identified by Kale (2004), Francesconi (2009) and others who argue that, in some cultural contexts at least, people are increasingly turning to religion to counter the challenges of a contemporary materialistic lifestyle, whilst in other cultures there is increasing interest in more general spirituality and activities associated with a search for spirituality (Chapter Two). For example, according to Pew Global Organisation (2005), a majority of Muslims worldwide now classify themselves as Muslims rather than nationals of particular countries whilst Yeoman (2007) reports that Islam is spreading rapidly and, by 2030, will be the world's largest religion according to numbers of adherents. At the same time, although on the one hand, and despite a background of increasing wealth in some Islamic nations, many pilgrims remain on a low-income and are driven by their religious beliefs, on the other hand there is evidence of a growing Islamic middle class which enables followers to make (affordable) the pilgrimage more easily. Hence, Islam is but one example of increasing participation in religious and spiritual activities which in turn, is positively affecting the (religious) tourism industry and businesses related to it (Haq et al., 2008:137-138; Sizer, 1999).

To summarise, then, the evolution of consumer culture an economy based upon the widespread commoditisation / commodification of goods, services and experiences has encouraged consumers (or, in the context of this thesis, tourists and pilgrims) to expect immediate satisfaction from products and services designed to meet their specific needs. Moreover, this expectation has been transmitted to the consumption of religious practices and experiences. Religion must, therefore, present itself as a valued commodity and, to achieve this, it must be packaged and advertised within a strong brand identity (Einstein, 2008: 12). Consequently, religious destinations are increasingly seeking to exploit the market, cashing in on a ready-made brand identity of religion, specifically responding to both increasing demand and recognition of the role

of consumption / materialism in underpinning the achievement of pilgrims' higher social status among their communities. And as explained in the following chapter, this has been a path followed by Saudi Arabia, building on its established 'brand' as the cradle of Islam.

Inevitably, however, this commodification of religion and religious tourism suggests that the sanctity of pilgrims, destinations and sacred rituals is being challenged. More specifically, the potential exists for the authenticity of the religious (tourist) experience to be diminished. Hence, this chapter now turns to a discussion of authenticity and tourist experience.

3.3 Commodification, sanctity and authenticity

Sanctity, or holiness, purity, or sacredness, is fundamental to the conservation of the religious meaning or authenticity of a religious destination (Olsen, 2006). Within the context of religious tourism, the term sanctity is used inter-changeably with authenticity, both being considered as the counterpoint of the commodification of religious places. Shackley (2002) applied the notion of sanctity in her study of 43 churches, identifying some basic influences in the creation of sanctity, such as 'an intimacy to God' and 'the acquisition of spiritual merit', whilst Olsen (2006) proposes a number of managerial actions required to maintain the sanctity of religious places, such as minimising the extent of commodification, establishing visitor-free zones for the use of only worshippers, regulating crowding and informing / educating visitors about religion through the use of specialist guides. Policies such as charging tourists / pilgrims an entry fee can offend the holiness of believers who have to 'pay to pray' (Shackley, 2002), whilst simply the physical impacts of overcrowding can destroy peaceful, spiritual atmospheres (Olsen, 2006).

Importantly, sanctity, as part of an authentic religious experience, appeals to both 'sacred' and 'secular' visitors and tourists. Indeed, the pursuit of sanctity and authenticity in a religious journey has been broadly recognised in religious tourism studies, religious tourism being conventionally defined as 'a form of tourism where tourist/pilgrim of a specific belief travels to visit locations of religious significance in their faith' (El Hanandeh, 2013: 1). Thus, religious destinations are implicitly sacred although, for non-believers, such sites do not necessarily display or convey an intrinsic sanctity (Belhassen et al., 2008; Bremer, 2006). Four distinctive categories of religious tourism attractions, namely, pilgrimage shrines, religious structures, festivals and purpose-built attractions are identified in the literature (Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Shackley, 2003; Shoval, 2000).

Although pilgrimage shrines are primarily the focus of spiritual journeys, religious structures are common sites of worship (and, often, also tourist attractions), whilst festivals often take the form of religious gatherings. Pilgrimage shrines are also considered inherently sacred (Olsen, 2003); however, purpose-built religious attractions are designed to draw visitors for tourism. As a result, it is possible to distinguish religious attractions based on visitors' travel motivations, from pilgrims (religiously sacred) to tourists (secular/sacred) (Hughes et al., 2013).

As considered in the previous chapter, pilgrimage, normally defined as a journey to a sacred place undertaken as an act of will or religious duty, has been at the centre of religious tourism since prehistoric times (Josan, 2009). In modern times, this phenomenon has experienced an international revival and has become increasingly popular as a form of (secular) tourism (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2006). According to Collins-Kreiner et al., 2000), there has been a lack of empirical studies into this phenomenon although more recently it has attracted increasing academic attention (for example, Leppakari & Griffin, 2016; Raj & Griffin, 2015). Significantly, pilgrims are usually labelled as 'devotees' who rejoice their faith (Ambrósio, 2007) and seek meaning and authenticity (Cohen, 1979) whereas, in contrast, traditional tourists visit religious places for other reasons, such as those connected to nature, culture, history, leisure, adventure and pleasure (Bremer, 2006; Shackley, 2006). Cohen (1992) specified that visitors who follow a religion relevant to the site can be considered as pilgrim–tourists, whereas non-believers are considered to be traveller–tourists.

However, when religious tourism becomes commodified, the meaning or significance of religious products, places and events is transformed; in the extreme, they may become meaningless. More specifically, religious culture is altered and often destroyed through its exploitation as a tourist attraction (Cohen, 1988). This suggests that when local religion and religious practices are produced and packaged for the tourist market, their intrinsic value as part of the local religious identity becomes threatened, whilst the commodification of religion diminishes the meaning of religious culture and may also have negative consequences for tourists/pilgrims who visit the destination area (Lenao, 2009; MacCannell, 1973). Simply put, commodified religious, products and culture lose their meaning to local people yet, as the need to present tourists with ever-more extraordinary and exotic attractions grows, religious products are increasingly embellished to look 'authentic' to tourists (Boorstin,1964; Cohen,1988). As an extreme example, a Christian theme park in Orlando, USA, the *Holy Land Experience*, is much like it sounds; visitors are provided with full-size recreations of Biblical scenes intended

to bring the Holy Land to life, including a Jerusalem street market, the Great Temple, the House of Judea, Calvary's Garden Tomb, Esther's Banquet Hall, and so on. The interactive exhibits are designed to take visitors back 2,000 years and thousands of miles away, to the people and places depicted in the Bible. Even the main entrance is designed to appear as the Jaffa Gate into the ancient city of Jerusalem; whilst visitors can witness re-enactments of the crucifixion (see Figure 3.1 and www.holylandexpereience.com).

Figure 3.1: The Holy land experience

Source: https://image.stern.de/5979310/uncropped-793-529/3266c7ce5ecaf80d625ddf865a4637d3/AO/holy-land-experience-1-jpg--bd7274177c570327-.jpg

More generally, artificial cultural and religious products and biblical scenes may be progressively 'staged' for tourists/pilgrim and ornamented so as to appear authentic. As MacCannell (1973: 602) observes, 'Tourists make brave sorties out from their hotels hoping, perhaps, for an authentic experience, but their paths can be traced in advance over small increments of what is for them increasingly apparent authenticity proffered by [staged] tourist settings. Adventurous tourists progress from stage to stage, always in the public eye, and greeted everywhere by their obliging hosts'.

To summarise, tourism-induced commoditisation of religious places, practices and products may diminish their meaning and significance not only to the local community

but also to tourists. It thus appears that the more that religious tourism flourishes, the more it may become inauthentic.

Numerous studies have been undertaken into the relationship between authenticity and tourism, from the above-mentioned notion of staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973,1976) to both conceptual and empirical studies of authenticity in tourism (for example, Harkin, 1995; Olsen & Timothy, 2002; Wang, 1999), whilst Sharpley (2008) provides a detailed overview of the topic. Within the context of religious tourism in particular, it is argued that commodification and staged authenticity may weaken the genuineness or authentic nature of religious experiences since they accede to tourists tastes which may not necessarily reflect the authentic religious tourism (Cohen, 1988). Following this line of thought, Digance (2003, 2006) introduced the concept of 'new' pilgrims, who are at the same time both sacred and secular, reflecting the fuzziness of authenticity in their religious faith, religious journey and contemporary lives.

The custodians of a pilgrimage, however, face something of a dilemma. On the one hand, they should seek to ensure that the pilgrims should benefit from the complete authentic spirituality of the journey (Collins-Kreiner, 2010); on the other hand, once the destination or event is promoted in the tourism market (for justifiable reasons of economic development) it become a commodity and, as a consequence, potentially loses its authenticity to pilgrims /tourists (Shepherd, 2002). Therefore, the next section of this chapter reviews the role of authenticity in tourism generally and in religious tourism in particular. This will provide a framework for establishing how pilgrims perceive the authenticity or otherwise of contemporary religious destinations, the holy rituals and their subsequent social identity.

3.3.1 Authenticity, tourism and religious tourism

MacCannell (1973, 1976, 1989) introduced the theme of 'authenticity' – and specifically the concept of staged authenticity – to the sociological study of tourist motivations and experiences more than forty years ago, his fundamental argument being that tourists are on a quest for authentic experiences but, given the staged nature of their experiences, they inevitably fail in that quest. Conversely, some years earlier, Daniel Boorstin (1964) had suggested the opposite, that tourists are satisfied with inauthentic, 'pseudo' events. Together, they represented two extremes of the tourism authenticity 'debate', since when the topic has become a fixed agenda item in tourism studies (Brown, 1996; Bruner, 1989, 1994; Chhabra, Healy & Sills, 2003; Cohen, 1979, 1988, 2003; Daniel, 1996; Ehrentraut, 1993; Harkin ,1995; Hughes, 1995; Littrell, Anderson & Brown, 1993; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Pearce & Moscardo, 1986; Redfoot, 1984;

Salamone, 1997; Selwyn, 1996; Shenhav-Keller, 1993; Silver, 1993; Taylor, 2001; Turner & Manning, 1988; Wang, 1999).

Given the breadth and complexity of the subject, embracing as it does issues ranging from marketing (Silver, 1993) to the semiology of tourism (Culler, 1981), a full review of the relationship between authenticity and tourism is beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that, as the concept of authenticity has been increasingly applied to the promotion and marketing of tourism, its ambiguity and limitations have been progressively exposed. Specifically, critics question its usefulness and validity because tourist motivations or experiences cannot be explained in terms of conventional concepts of authenticity.

The roots of research into tourism and authenticity can be traced back to the beginnings of modern mass tourism in the nineteenth century. Specifically, concerns were raised over the extent to which emerging forms of modern tourism, such as mass transport and infrastructure, were diluting the perceived authenticity of the tourism experience. For example, Thomas Cook, the pioneer of package tourism, was criticised by Charles Lever in Blackwood's Magazine in 1865, who described cities in Italy as being 'deluged with droves of these creatures, for they never separate, and you see them forty in number pouring along a street with their director, now in front, now at the rear, circling them like a sheepdog' (Lever, 1865, cited in Sharpley, 2008: 8-1). Implicit in this criticism is the perceived inauthenticity of the tourists' experience, a theme which Boorstin (1964) explored in depth in his essay referred to above, arguing that not only are mass tourists provided with inauthentic experiences, but they accept them happily. In contrast, MacCannell (1989) proposes that contemporary tourists, as alienated members of modern society, are motivated by a need to experience authenticity: 'Modern man has been condemned to look elsewhere, everywhere, for his authenticity, to see if he can catch a glimpse of it reflected in the simplicity, poverty, chastity or purity of others' (MacCannell, 1989: 41). Thus, for MacCannell, the phenomenon of tourism pivots on a quest for authenticity, reflecting what is missing in modern contemporary life; accordingly, the tourist is a model for 'modern-man-in-general' (MacCannell, 1989: 1).

But, in the context of tourism, what is the meaning of 'authenticity'? According to Dann (1996: 199), the word authenticity is used frequently both in our daily lives in general and as part of the 'language' of tourism in particular where it is used to describe, for example, the originality of local products, local cuisine, festivals, architecture and so on, or more generally in advertisements, brochures and other publicity to describe (and

sell) particular types of holidays. Thus, the word 'authenticity' is used or interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, it is used in its more traditional sense to describe things which, as Trilling (1972: 11) suggests are 'what they appear to be or are claimed to be'. Principally, authenticity is a tangible quality of something; if it is produced or manufactured using traditional methods or enacted according to custom or tradition, then it may be considered to be authentic.

On the other hand, authenticity is often used to describe particular types of holidays or tourist experiences, in particular those that are considered different from 'inauthentic' holidays and experiences. And if, as MacCannell (1976,1989) suggests, modern society is itself inauthentic and tourism a quest for the authentic, then authentic holidays and experiences can only be found in the pre-modern, where the 'past is a foreign country' (Lowenthal, 1990). Consequently, the word 'authentic' becomes a socially-constructed label to describe places, products, modes of travel or experiences more generally that are traditional or pre-modern in character. Hence, mass tourism is inauthentic whereas some forms of niche travel are claimed to be authentic.

Cohen (1988: 373) further develops this argument, suggesting that 'the absence of commoditisation… [Is] …a crucial consideration in judgements of authenticity'. More specifically, he proposes that authenticity is a characteristic rooted in pre-modern life; cultural products can be deemed authentic if produced 'prior to the penetration of modern Western influences' (Cohen, 1998: 374). Anything that has been created or enacted with the use of modern equipment, tools, ideas, cultures or practices (or, in a sense, contaminated by modern Western influences cannot be considered authentic.

In the context of this thesis, it could be argued, therefore, that when religious rituals which are based upon tradition, embrace modern elements, whether products or services, when they become commodified; that is, they may lose their authenticity. As a consequence, it might also be argued that the experience of religious tourists/pilgrim thus also becomes inauthentic; the spiritual or religious experience being superseded by a more materialistic touristic experience, as Hajj pilgrims could be one of the examples of it. Importantly, however, this presupposes that all tourists / pilgrims recognise, understand and react to authentic / inauthentic products and experiences in the same way. This is not, however, the case. As Pearce and Moscardo (1986: 129) observe 'whether or not tourists are satisfied with their holiday experience demands a full consideration of the nature of the tourist environment, the tourists' perceptions of that environment and the tourists' need or preference for authenticity'. In a nutshell, authenticity is a negotiated outcome between the tourist / pilgrim and the event or

experience, based upon the individual tourist / pilgrims/s expectations, needs, beliefs, prior experience and so on. Hence, it is necessary to consider the relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience in particular.

3.3.2 Authenticity and the tourist experience

In exploring the relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience, the work of Cohen (1979) and Wang (1999) are of particular value, the former establishing a conceptual framework (or 'phenomenology') of experiences based upon the location of the tourist's 'spiritual centre', the latter considering three perspectives on authenticity within tourism.

3.3.2.1 Cohen's phenomenology of tourist experiences

Cohen (1979) argues that tourist roles and behaviour can best be understood in the context of the desired tourist experience. This, in turn, is determined by the location of the tourist's 'spiritual centre', or whether the tourist is, at one extreme, spiritually rooted in the normal, home environment (in simple terms, the tourist is fulfilled and finds meaning 'at home') and, at the other extreme, feels alienated and hence seeks the spiritual centre 'out there; (following MacCannell's argument, seeking authenticity in other times and places). Based upon this continuum, Cohen (1979) proposes five modes of touristic experiences, as follows:

1) The recreational mode

The recreational mode tourist is spiritually centred in his / her home environment; no need is felt to seek out meaning elsewhere and, as a consequence, tourism represents a recreational experience similar to other types of entertainment such going to the theatre, engaging in sport and so on. The tourist relishes the journey, because it reinstates somatic and psychological wellbeing; literally, tourism is undertaken to re-create. However, even this mode of tourist experience is connected to religious tourism as the journey might be to a sacred centre, the experience of which revitalises and 're-creates'. Nevertheless, the meaning of the religious journey (or pilgrimage) might be secularised; it loses its deeper, spiritual content and although the experience may be 'stimulating' it is not personally significant (Lowenthal, 1962). Simply stated, the tourist does not have a deep obligation to travel as a means of self-realisation or self-expansion (Mitford, 1959, cited in Cohen, 1984). More broadly, therefore, seeking or experiencing authenticity is, for the recreational tourist, irrelevant.

2) The diversionary mode

Recreational tourism, as discussed above, is a temporary movement away from the centre which serves to strength the adherence to that centre. The diversionary mode is an intermediate position beyond this. The tourist may sense some degree of alienation but is not seeking meaning or authenticity elsewhere and, thus, tourism offers a diversion, a means of temporarily forgetting about or escaping from home. For the religious tourist, the journey or pilgrimage offers a diversion but is not necessarily spiritually significant.

3) The experiential mode

The recreational mode is a mid-point and, perhaps, relates most closely to MacCannell's (1976, 1989) concept of the modern tourist seeking authenticity elsewhere. The experiential tourist, according to Cohen, feels the alienation of modern society and, hence, seeks meaning and reality elsewhere, in other societies and cultures. However, the experiential tourist neither identifies with nor rejects home society and inevitably returns to it, the journey compensating temporarily for the inauthenticity of home life. Hence, parallels can perhaps be drawn with religious journeys or pilgrimages.

4) The experimental mode

This mode of touristic experience is characteristic of people whose spiritual centre does not lie in their own home society and, hence, who are seeking a centre elsewhere, but in different directions. They possess what Kavolis (1970, cited in Cohen, 1988) describes as a decentralised personality; they lack defined priorities and commitments, are pre-disposed to try out alternative lifestyles in their quest for meaning, bot through tourism and other activities. Thus, the experimental tourist seeks authenticity, but does not commit to or immerse themselves in any one new culture. In the context of this thesis, the experimental tourist might be one seeking spiritual fulfilment in a variety of places and practices, though not through a specific pre-determined religious ritual.

5) The existential mode

The existential tourist is the conceptual counterpoint to the recreational tourist. The spiritual centre is, according to Cohen (1979), firmly located and found elsewhere; the tourist becomes fully immersed in the local society and culture, and meaning and authenticity is found in chosen centre. The existential mode is, therefore of direct relevance to this thesis, in as much as the tourist / pilgrim is fully committed to an 'optional' spiritual, sacred centre in a process which Berger and Luke (1960:144) refer to as 'switching worlds'. The tourist /pilgrim fulfil their quest for human-spiritual union;

they achieve an authentic 'existential' religious experience. Yet, in a sense, the tourist / pilgrim who, through their religious journey finds their centre-out-there, lives their day-to-day life in 'exile'. More specifically, meaningful 'actual' life is at the centre, and it is the experience of life at the centre that sustains the tourist in their daily life in 'exile'.

However, the 'existential' experience can become touristic phenomenon when the tourist / pilgrim, for a variety of practical reasons, is unable or unwilling to move permanently to their 'optional' centre, but must live in two worlds. The first world is their daily practical life which may be empty of deeper meaning; the second world is their 'optional' centre, to which they will depart on periodical pilgrimages to derive spiritual sustenance, as in the case of pilgrims to Mecca who annually return there for a few days, while spending the rest of the year in their home country.

Nevertheless, the existential mode of tourism, as proposed by Cohen, and conventional religious tourism or pilgrimage may in some respects be, from a phenomenological perspective, distinct. Conventional religious pilgrimage is a holy journey to a centre which, though geographically 'ex-centric', is still the centre of the pilgrim's religion; it is the 'magnetic' centre from which pilgrim draws meaning, the spiritual centre of their society and life, Hence, although living away from the centre, the pilgrim is not living in 'exile'; their world and daily life is sacred, or given meaning via the centre; it is, in short 'authentic'. Moreover, the centre is a given; it is not 'optional' or a matter of choice. Conversely, for the 'existential' tourist/pilgrim according to Cohen's analysis though, the centre is not a given dictated by their religion or religious beliefs. Rather, it is an 'optional' centre which, perhaps serendipitously, is discovered and adopted. Thereafter, the centre remains outside the limits of their everyday existence; it does not sanctify their world and hence, the pilgrim lives in 'exile'. The pilgrimage, then, is not a journey from the border of the religious world towards it centre; it is a journey from anarchy into another universe, from futility to authentic existence (Cohen, 1979).

For the purposes of this discussion then, the existential mode of tourist experience, though offering potentially contradictory perspectives, is of most relevance to considering authenticity in the context of religious tourism experiences. Religious tourism may serve to re-affirm or strengthen a constant sense of meaning (authenticity) experienced in everyday life; equally, it may be a transitory experience in which tourists / pilgrims find their unique place or centre in the world, in which they experience an exclusive connectedness (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006: 307). Indeed, some claim that experiences of 'existential mode' of authenticity characteristically occur serendipitously

in unexpected situations, and cannot be repeated at will (Cary 2004: 66). They constitute a 'special state of Being in which one is true to oneself and acts this way as opposed to becoming lost in public roles and public spheres' (Steiner & Reisinger 2006: 301). Either way, however, the tourist /pilgrim becomes immersed in an existential, authentic experience, yet one that might be contaminated by commodification, by the intrusion of modern, non-traditional influences, processes, products and practices that serve to dilute or destroy the experience, hence the need to explore how tourists perceive authenticity.

3.3.2.2 Theorising authenticity experience

In his widely-cited study, Wang (1999) proposes a broader framework offering objectivist, subjectivist and postmodernist perspectives on authenticity. As a consequence, Wang identifies three distinctive manifestations of authenticity and authentic experience: objective, constructive and existential (see Table 3.1)

Table 3.1: Authenticity in tourism

Object-related authenticity in tourism	Activity-related authenticity in tourism
Object Authenticity: Refers to the authenticity of originals. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism are equated to an epistemological experience (i.e. cognition) of the authenticity of original.	**Existential Authenticity:** Refers to a potential existential state of being to be activated by tourism activities. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism are to achieve this activated existential state of Being within the liminal process of tourism. Existential authenticity may have nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects.
Constructive Authenticity: Refers to tourists' or tourism producers' perceptions of objects in terms of their imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs or powers, Various versions of authenticities may thus be attached to the same objects. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism and the authenticity of toured objects are constitutive of one another. In this sense, the authenticity of the toured object is in fact symbolic authenticity.	

Source: Adapted from Wang (1999)

The notion of objective authenticity reflects the traditional, museum-based conceptualisation of authenticity; an object is known to be genuine or authentic, and its

authenticity is acknowledged by tourists. It then follows that an authentic experience is instigated by this acknowledgment of the objects (or other cultural form or performance) as being genuine or authentic. As such, there is a complete and objective benchmark to measure authenticity. Hence, even if the toured objects are fake or artificial, or what MacCannell (1973) called 'staged authenticity', tourists may consider that they have had an authentic experience, if they believe the objects to be authentic. In contrast, constructive authenticity is the outcome of social construction, not an objective quality what is being visited or experiences. Cultural products or performances may seem authentic not because they are inherently authentic but because they are socially created as such in terms of perspectives, dogmas or perceptions. In the simplest terms, constructive authenticity is determined not through objective proof of provenance, or a measurable quality, but through social forces or influences. For example, a cultural performance for tourists may be promoted by performers themselves as authentic, even though it's performed out of original place and context.

In comparison to the concepts of both constructive and objective authenticity, the focus of which are on if and how toured objects are considered to be authentic, existential authenticity is concerned not with the object but with the tourist; authenticity becomes related to the intersubjective emotional state stimulated by the transitional process of tourist experiences. In other words, authenticity refers to a state of being, to a tourist's emotions, sensations and sense of self. This in turn may be depending not on toured objects, but more on the relationship between the tourist and the place they are in, (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). Indeed, Wang (1999) explores the ways in which the academic study of place can inform understanding of existential of authenticity in tourism. He argues that authenticity is multifaceted in that it not only points to one's experiences and personally constructed meanings, but is also related to the tourist' s performance of visiting a destination.

In this sense, the concept of existential authenticity is of direct relevance to religious tourism and pilgrimage. For example, is not uncommon for tourists / pilgrims – be they individuals or groups – to follow precise routes through the built or natural environment. Such physical routes or trails, particularly in the case of religious pilgrimage experiences, are fundamental to validating the experience of the journey, to enhancing connectivity to with the location, and to legitimising the pilgrim's religious belief. Without following such routes or, more generally, without grounding the journey in the physical world, the quest or potential for authenticity vanishes. Therefore, it could be argued that religious pilgrimage experiences stimulate physical, spiritual and mental conditions in

which pilgrims experience an existential knowledge of being authentic to themselves—a knowledge stimulated by the very act of pilgrimage (Wang, 1999).

At the same time, however, it is not necessarily only the individual tourist /pilgrim's activities and their engagement with place that determines authenticity. The objective and socially constructed authenticity of toured objects cannot be detached from the overall experience itself. In similar vein, although Wang's (1999) division of authenticity into object-based (object and constructive authenticity) and activity-based notions (existential authenticity) is valuable in identifying two distinctive conceptualisations of this term, each with its own theoretical underpinnings and applicability to religious tourism, this contrast is problematic because it confuses the manner in which toured sites/objects and social discourses often exist in dialogue with experiences of existential authenticity. More simply stated, objective and / or constructed inauthenticity may compete with existential authenticity, with implications for the overall experience. Indeed, it is precisely with this potential conflict that this thesis is concerned.

This is not to say, of course, that place is not of relevance to the religious tourism experience; pilgrims are attached to sacred places because of the roles such places play in their religious belief systems and identities. For instance, the city of Mecca (the focus of this thesis) plays a fundamental role in the identity of every religious Muslim who is obliged to visit the city at least once in their lifetime. Similarly, in the Jewish tradition, Jerusalem is the holiest city; both the prayer of Yom Kippur and the Passover Seder (the Hebrew word for the annual ceremonial service and meal) end with the sentence 'next year in Jerusalem' (Stewart et al., 2008: 674). Thus, explorations of existential authenticity must take into account the precise setting in which this emotion is experienced and to the collective, socially recognised senses that shape tourists' understanding of that place. Essentially, there must always be a consideration of the relationship between tourists' and pilgrims' perceptions and beliefs and the physical location to which they travel. Nevertheless, the nature of that place may be dynamic; its spiritual or cultural significance may be challenged by modern interventions, by the commodification of products, services and rituals, in turn challenging the meaning or authenticity of the religious tourism experience.

3.4 Summary

In considering both commodification and authenticity, this chapter has illustrated that no society and culture can be static; this suggests that understanding of the objective and subjective authenticity of places, events and tourist / pilgrim experiences must also be dynamic. To be specific, authenticity is entrenched as much in the present as it is in

the past and, as more and more countries develop and reformed economically, so too are tourists /pilgrims leading contemporary lives both outside and within their spiritual centres, wherever those may be located. Thus, evolving and contemporary culture must be accepted as authentic. To do otherwise, to observe objective, constructive and existential authenticity as being in other times and places would result in authentic tourism experiences becoming based on fable and imagery, the representations of authenticity in the host societies becoming as inauthentic as the societies from which tourists / pilgrims, momentarily, escape.

Perhaps as a consequence of this dynamism, the literature reveals no consensus on what is authentic or inauthentic; indeed, what is or is not authentic can only be perceived by the tourist / pilgrim. For example, there can be no doubt that those who performed pilgrimages and other religious ritual in pre-modern times benefited from what today would be considered authentic experiences (though perhaps in contrast to today, certainly less comfortable experiences); equally, there is no doubt that many contemporary pilgrims following traditional journeys, albeit using modern facilities and amenities, also consider that they have authentic experiences. Nevertheless, when commodification of the religious tourism experience occurs, not only through the production and sale of commodities but, as considered earlier in this chapter, also through a fundamental transformation, modernisation and commercialisation of the overall experience, questions remain over the impact on the religious tourist experience.

And it is to these questions that this thesis now turns, focusing in particularly on Mecca and the Hajj. Hence, the next chapter commences with a broad introduction to Islam and the Hajj as a pilgrimage journey before going on to discuss the contemporary development of Mecca, highlighting in particular how the city and the Hajj are potentially being challenged by the process of commodification.

Chapter Four

Islam, Mecca and Hajj

4.1 Introduction

As stated in the introductory chapter, the overall purpose of this thesis is to explore the extent to which the spiritual experience of the Islamic pilgrim is being transformed into a touristic experience as a result of the contemporary commodification of the pilgrimage. More specifically, it seeks to appraise critically the consequences of the commercialisation and commodification of the Hajj on the experiences of those participating in it, considering if and how it is being transformed from a spiritual into a touristic / consumptive experience. Hence, the preceding two chapters have established the conceptual framework for the research. In Chapter Two, which explored the phenomenon of religious tourism within the broader context of the tourism-religion-spirituality nexus, it was argued that religious tourism is a significant and growing sector of the overall tourism market, embracing a diversity of meanings, places and practices but which may be broadly defined as tourism that is undertaken wholly or in part for religious or spiritual purposes. In particular, however, it was suggested that the economic potential of religious tourism has been recognised by destinations and, hence, the 'production' or supply of religious tourism has become increasingly commodified. Thus, Chapter Three then considered the concept of commodification in the specific contexts of religion and tourism before going on to address the issue of authenticity of tourist experiences and the extent to which that authenticity may be challenged by commodification. It concluded that although the authenticity of (religious / spiritual) tourism experiences may be diminished by commodification, much depends on the expectations, experiences and understanding of individual tourists, their existential authenticity being essentially a negotiated experience.

Having established the conceptual framework for the research, this chapter now turns to its principal focus, namely, the Hajj. Specifically, its purpose is to introduce the Hajj and its role within a broader understanding of Islam and Islamic ideologies. It then goes on to identify and critique the manner in which the Hajj and holy city of Mecca have become increasingly commercialised and commodified as a basis for both justifying and underpinning the subsequent research into the nature of the experience of pilgrims participating in the Hajj.

4.2 Islam and Islamic Ideology

Islam is the religion of an estimated 1.6 billion people worldwide, including the majority of the population in at least 57 countries (Miller, 2009). In 2010, the countries with the highest Muslim populations were Indonesia (205 million or 13% of all Muslims), Pakistan (178 million), India (177 million), Bangladesh (148 million), Egypt (80 million), Turkey (75 million), and Iran (75 million). This means that Asia accounts for more than 60% of the global Muslim population whilst 20% lives in the Middle East and North Africa. Nevertheless, the Middle East-North Africa region has the highest percentage of Muslim-majority countries; 'more than half of the 20 countries and territories in that region have populations that are approximately 95% Muslim or greater' (Miller, 2009: 1). By way of comparison, there are only 2.6 million Muslims in the USA and 2.9 million in the UK (Pew Forum, 2011).

The Arabic word Islam literally means 'surrender' or 'submission'. Islam, as a faith, means total and sincere surrender to God (Allah) so that one can live in peace and tranquillity (Ansari, 2013). The name Islam is universal in meaning. It is not derived from a tribe of people or an individual, such as Judaism being named after the tribe or kingdom of Judah, Christianity after Christ and Buddhism after Buddha. Putting it alternatively, Islam is not a name selected by human beings; it was divinely communicated from (Allah) God. A person who voluntarily surrenders his/her will to Allah is called Muslim (Seda, 2002: 6). Islamic beliefs and practices are based on the Qur'an (Holy Book of Islam), the Hadith (sayings of the Prophets reported by others), Sunnah (actions of the Prophet reported by others), and the opinions of early jurists based on their construal of the Qur'an, Hadith, and Sunnah). Islamic beliefs and practices are strongly related since devout Muslims do what they think is right and seek to evade what is wrong in terms of conduct. The following, the five core fundamental beliefs (or Pillars) of Islam, are required for all believers and are the foundation for Muslim life (Ahmad Al-Sharif et al., 1965).

i.   The faith of belief (Shahada)
ii.   Five times daily Salah (Prayers)
iii. Giving to the poor (Zakat)
iv.   Fasting during Ramadan, 'Sawm' (Fasting)
v.   Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)

These are now each discussed in more detail:

4.2.1 Shahada

The shahada is the core of faith in Islam and the first of the 'Five Pillars' of Islam. The word shahada in Arabic means 'testimony.' The shahada is to testify to two things:

i. Nothing deserves worship except Allah.
ii. Muhammad is the last Messenger of Allah.

A Muslim is simply one who bears witness and testifies that nothing deserves worship except Allah and Muhammad is the last messenger of Allah. The Islamic creed of belief (confession of faith) in Arabic is لاَ إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُوُل اللهِ ; (Laa ilaa-ha illal -Lahoo Mohammadur Rasool Ullaha). In English, this means 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah' this statement emphasises belief in the oneness (Tawhid) of Allah and the acceptance of Muhammad as Allah's messenger and final prophet. A sincere declaration of this statement is required for anyone to be considered a Muslim (Seda, 2002: 6).

4.2.2 Prayer

Muslims say prayers five times a day facing the 'Kaaba' (the black cube) situated in Mecca. The first prayer, said at dawn, is called 'Fajr'; the second, at midday around noon, is 'Dhuhr'; the third around 4:00pm is called 'Asr'; the fourth at sunset is 'Maghrib; and the last prayer, around 90 minutes after sunset, is called 'Isha'a'.
In Muslim areas, the call to prayer (*Azan)* is announced from the minaret of the mosque or by a loudspeaker that can be heard throughout the community. Muslims must bow during prayer so that their foreheads contact the ground. Every mosque around the world has a marker that indicates the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca, toward which Muslims must face and bow. In addition, the ritual of Hajj and Umrah cannot be performed without the Kaaba as pilgrims have to perform circumambulation seven times and must be physically present there. The Prayer and Hajj involves a direct relationship between Allah and the individual (Rahman, 1998: 40).

4.2.3 Zakat

Giving to the poor is an important religious practice in Islam. Honour and courage are highly valued by Muslims, and are expressed in part by compassion for those in need. More than thirty verses in the Qur'an refer to 'Zakat', which serves to reallocate wealth from the rich to the poor and other dispossessed Muslims. As one of the five pillars of Islam, giving is part of the agreement made between Allah and humans. Rahman (1998: 45) notes that the Qur'an is so intent on emphasising good works and giving of one's wealth to support the poor (i.e. active rather than passive acts of worship) that in

two places it even promises Allah's favour and salvation to whoever 'believe in Allah and the Last Day and do good'.

Zakat involves paying 2.5% per year of all capital assets (savings of cash) and agricultural goods, gold, silver, stocks and livestock (all assets owned continuously through the lunar year). Islamic scholars differ in what assets are included in the calculation of the Zakat and how the calculation is performed. A person's home, clothing and household furniture are excluded. Zakat is paid through a voluntary rather compulsory system, except in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan where Zakat is obligatory and is collected by the state. The Qur'an specifies who is eligible to receive the zakat. There are eight categories of individuals eligible to receive Zakat:

i.   Those in abject poverty (living on less than $1.25 per day).
ii.   Those who cannot meet their basic needs.
iii. Those who collect the zakat (the civil service).
iv.   Non-Muslims sympathetic to Islam or those who wish to convert.
v.   Those who are trying to free themselves from slavery or war (for payment of ransoms or blood money).
vi.   Those whose debts make it unable for them to meet their basic needs.
vii. Those working for an Islamic cause, i.e., 'purely for the sake of Allah' (في سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ), which includes defence, religious education, and health.
viii. Children living on the street, or to provide facilities for travellers (Nasr, 2002: 17).

4.2.4 Fasting

Regulation of food intake is important in Islam. Muslims are encouraged not to eat more than what their body requires. They are also responsible for feeding hungry relatives or neighbours if they cannot afford food. Muslims are also required to fast. The reason is 'so that you may be mindful of Allah' (Omar, 1993: 280). Muslims are obligated (Fard) to fast during the month of Ramadan from dawn till sunset. Fasting helps people to remember that there are poor people who cannot afford food. Both the rich and poor cannot eat anything during the daytime in the month of Ramadan. When there is no food consumption or tobacco use, and the focus is on prayer and worship, this will impact a person's mood and mental state; there may also be physical health benefits to fasting as well (Stipp, 2013).

4.2.5 Hajj:

The Hajj (Pilgrimage) to the Kaaba in Mecca is one of the five mandatory pillars of Islam. It originally provided the opportunity for Muslims to establish the fifth pillar of Islam and respond to the timeless, magnificent call of the Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH). Allah said in the holy book of Quran: ''And proclaim to the mankind the Hajj [pilgrimage]; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass'' (Surah Al-Hajj, 22:27).

Mecca's significance lies not only in the fact that it was Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) birth place and where Islam commenced, but also because it is the only city in the world where the Hajj can be performed. It possesses the sites necessary for the performance of the Hajj, such as the Kaaba, the Fields of Arafat, Muzdalifah and Mina, (Abdur-Rahman ibn 'Abdil-Aziz as-Sudays, 2014: 4).

The Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said 'if someone performs Hajj while refraining from intercourse and its precursors, as well as sins, he shall return absolved from his sins just as the day his mother gave birth to him' (Sahih al-Bukhari 1819, Hadith 45). In another hadith, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said ''There is no reward for the accepted Hajj other than Jannah (Heaven)''. Therefore, the Hajj has a profound impact on and benefits for Muslims in general, and for the pilgrims in particular.

Thus, pilgrims undertake the strenuous journey to fulfil this act of worship in hope of gaining the best possible reward. And approximately three million people make this pilgrimage each year (United Press International (2010). Only Muslims can enter the city of Mecca and go into the Grand Mosque (Masjid al - Haram) that houses the Kaaba ('The Cube' or 'Sacred House'). The Hajj is required at least once in a lifetime of those who can afford to go and are physically able. 'Afford' means having extra finances beyond that needed to support one's family. The Hajj is the largest annual religious pilgrimage in the world. People come from many different countries to the high plains of Arafat outside Mecca in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar (Dhu al-Hijjah). The Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar and is 11-12 days shorter per year than the solar calendar, the one followed in the Western world. Each month lasts 29 to 30 days, depending on when the crescent moon appears. For example, in 2014 Dhu al-Hijjah was September 26 to October 24 and, in 2015, September 15 to October 14. In 2017, it commenced on 23 August. The Islamic calendar is also dated differently from the Gregorian (Western) calendar, commencing in the year 622, when the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emigrated from Mecca to another holy city of Medina. Dhu al-Hijjah is different from the month of Ramadan, which is the ninth month of the Islamic

calendar (in 2014, Ramadan occurred from June 29 to July 27; in 2017, it took place between 26 May and 24 June). During the Hajj, men must wear the same dress 'IHRAAM' (long white robes), which is another symbol of equality. Worshiping God together makes Muslims feel that they are not alone but part of something greater than themselves. Pilgrims are asked to leave everything behind them. Individuals must concentrate on their relationship with God and forget everything else that may be stressful in their lives (work, family problems, etc.). Being in an isolated place with a feeling of oneness and a chance to rethink issues provides an opportunity for self-examination and restructuring of attitudes and goals. Pilgrims are forbidden to argue during this time or make any negative remarks about other people. Only healthy discussions and pleasant words are allowed. The Hajj also involves physical exercise with much walking (and some running).

The following are the Pillars of Hajj:
  ➢ The intention (Niyyah) IHRAAM
  ➢ Staying at Arafat
  ➢ Spending the night at Al-Muzdalifah
  ➢ Staying in Mina
  ➢ The Sa'ee
  ➢ Tawaaf Al-Ifaadhah

(Sahih Muslim: 1218)

The obligations of the Hajj
  ➢ Entering the state of IHRAAM from the Meqat [Appointed place]
  ➢ Spending the nights in Mina, during the nights of Tashreeq [11th , 12th & 13th of Dhul-Hijjah]
  ➢ Spending the night in Muzdalifah
  ➢ Throwing the pebbles at the places of stoning, in the correct sequence [on the Day of sacrifice, and on the days of Tashreeq]
  ➢ The Farewell Tawaf
  ➢ Shaving the head or shortening the hair
  Note: if one leaves an obligation a Fidyah (Compensation) is needed by sacrificing in Mecca, a sheep and distributing it to the poor of Mecca.

(Sahi al-Bukhari, 1553-1559)

Invalid acts of the Hajj
  ➢ Sexual Intercourse
  ➢ Leaving off a pillars of the Hajj

Forbidden things in the state of IHRAAM

- ➢ Wearing clothing tailored to fit the limbs
- ➢ The women's wearing a face veil
- ➢ Men covering his head with turban or the like
- ➢ Perfume
- ➢ Cutting the nails
- ➢ Removing the hair
- ➢ Sexual intercourse, and that which leads to it
- ➢ Committing sins [lying, offending behaviour, ostentatious behaviour etc.]
- ➢ Disputing and arguing
- ➢ Hunting
- ➢ Cutting or uprooting any trees or green plants
- ➢ Making a marriage proposal, and contracting a marriage

(Sahi Muslim, 1177-1190)

4.3 Islamic Articles of Faith

In addition to the five pillars, there are also six articles of faith in Islam:
(i) Belief in Allah, (ii) Belief in the Prophets, (iii) Belief in Divine Books, (iv) Belief in the Day of Judgement, (v) Belief in Angels, and (vi) Belief in Destiny or fate (Qadr), and other important beliefs include those regarding life after death, intercession, and the role of the individual. The next section will consider in more detail these six articles of faith in Islam.

4.3.1 Belief in Allah

Allah is Arabic for God (literally 'the God'). While the Qur'an does not debate the nature of God as such, Allah is the basis for all of the teachings in the Qur'an that guide human conduct. Without God, nothing can exist or function in the universe (Ansari, 2013: 186).

Rahman (1998: 11) notes that the qualities of the relationship God with respect to humans are 'creation, sustenance [affection], guidance, and judgement'. God is the creator, the enormously compassionate one who knows everything. God is the first and the last. God sees everything humans do, hear everything, controls everything and nothing happens against God's will. God created both good and bad people for a purpose. Life is viewed as a kind of test among Muslims. It is not easy for believers to do their duty and there are many challenges to overcome. One of those challenges is dealing with the actions of those who have gone off track, who need to be shown the

right way. Each person carries a great responsibility—the responsibility of being the best person he or she can be.

Beliefs about God may have psychological consequences. When people feel that they are connected to God, whom they believe has unlimited power and is infinitely merciful, this helps them to relax and makes them more optimistic. This may help them feel that the unfairness they see in the world will not continue forever and that distressing and apparently bad events also have a purpose. While those events may seem terrible and hurt on first glance, they may not turn out to be so bad if people are patient and examine the events more deeply. Knowing God in Islam is considered a gift by itself that will help the individual to have patience and understanding. Muslims believe that God cares for people and will help them, but they must work hard to do right and be optimistic. God is most able to help those who work hard and expect the best. This belief helps create motivation to overcome obstacles and endure bad times based on the faith that good will result because God is in control (Koenig & Al Shohaib, 2016: 30-32).

4.3.2 Belief in the Prophets

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (literally exemplary) was born in approximately 570 CE in Mecca. He had no formal education. While meditating in a cave, the angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet and gave him revelations (Wahi). The prophets in Islam (the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and other prophets) are considered perfect human models (although are not necessarily sinless) (Omar, 1993). They worship God and live in the best way. Muslims believe that a prophet is a special creation of God, but would never ask people to worship anyone except God. The fact that prophets are human beings means it is possible for people to follow their guidance and live the way they do. Although people cannot be as perfect as prophets, everyone can learn from them and seek to follow their teachings. A prophet demonstrates how people should live at home and treats their families, how to help other people at work, and even how to run a country. Muslims believe that if prophets were not human beings (i.e., were angels or other supernatural beings), then it would not be possible for normal people to do what the prophets have done. Because prophets are humans, this means that people have the ability to live like them. Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad was the last and final prophet in a long line of messengers from God that started with Adam (and includes Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Jacob, Moses, David, Elijah, and John the Baptist, amongst others). Also on this list of prophets is Jesus the Christ or Messiah (Isa al - Mesiah), who is considered to be the only prophet to have been raised up to

heaven by God (3:55). He is believed to be the last prophet before the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Koenig & Al Shohaib, 2016: 30-32).

4.3.3 Divine Books

In Islam, the Holy Qur'an is the infallible Word of Allah. Muslims believe that it was dictated directly to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by the angel Gabriel reading from the original 'mother book' that resides in Heaven inscribed in Arabic on stone tablets. The Qur'an is believed to have come directly from God, and it is considered blasphemous to attribute the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an is arranged into 114 numbered 'Suras' (chapters) that contain numbered verses (Ayas). Other divine books recognized in Islam are the Torah (Tawrat), the Psalms (Zabur), and the Gospel (Injil). Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the final divine book that has corrected all the previous divine books that contained errors, were corrupted, or were lost. Muslims believe in all of these divine books (Torah, Psalms, and Gospel) as revealed by God in their original form. Muslim scholars believe that the 'Injil' refers to an original Gospel that was revealed by God to Jesus, but does not refer to the current Gospels of the New Testament, which are thought to contain some of Jesus' teachings but are not the original Gospel, which was corrupted or lost (New World Encyclopaedia, 2008).

4.3.4 The Day of Judgement

Both the Qur'an and Hadith refer to the Day of Judgement (the day of resurrection, or the 'day after' the end of the world). The Qur'an notes that (i) the Day is known only to God (33:63), (ii) the Prophet Muhammad cannot make it happen (6:57), (iii) on the Day it will seem to people that they were on earth only a very short time and everyone will recognize one another (10:45), (iv) God will resurrect everyone, even those who have turned to dust or stone (17:49), and (v) those who deny God's truth will suffer in the fire of hell (11:17). Before the Day comes, there are three periods of time with some overlap between periods. The first period began when the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) died and lasted until the death of his companions; the second period lasted 1,000 years; and the third period is the one we are in now and will end with the appearance of the Mahdi. The Mahdi, or guided one, is a leader who will usher in a period of about 7–9 years of justice and equality and will restore true religion, and then the world will end. Jesus the Christ (Isa) is foretold in the Qur'an to appear at this time: 'and he [Isa] shall be a known sign for (the coming of) the Hour (Day of Resurrection)' (43:61) (Haleem, 2008).

4.3.5 Angels

Muslims believe in angels, supernatural beings who act under the direction of Allah. They are not humans and never have been humans. In fact, they were asked by God to bow down to Adam (2:34). The Qur'an identifies Gabriel as the angel who appeared to the Prophet Muhammad, both to deliver the message of the Qur'an (2:97) and to miraculously transport the Prophet to Jerusalem (the Night Journey and ascension, 17:1, 17:60, 53:13–18). Both the angel Gabriel and the angel Michael are described in the Qur'an as message bearers from Allah (2:97–98; 66:4).

4.3.6 Destiny

Muslims believe in destiny, which means that, everything—all events and happenings in life—have a purpose and there are no random occurrences….

> It was not without purpose that human created the heavens and the earth and everything in between" (Quran, 38:27). God has decided everything beforehand and His will is supreme, above even human will (Quran, 57:22; 81:29).

4.3.7 Life after death

As death nears, it is the responsibility of the dying person to recite the confession of faith (Shahadah) and to seek the forgiveness of others whom he/she has wronged. After death, loud wailing by friends and family is forbidden, as is observance of the death beyond three days (Rahman, 1998: 129). The Qur'an makes it clear that death is not the end…. 'For the Qur'an, the after- death life is as concrete and palpable as the 'life in this world'; there is a natural continuity between the two, and death is the passage between them' (Rahman, 1998: 130). The quality of life after death—either heaven or hell—is determined by an individual's performance during this life. For the Muslim, death bed repentance is not allowed, since there is no more opportunity to work and do well. Qur'an says….

> God is always ready to accept repentance, He is full of mercy. But God only undertakes to accept repentance from those who do evil out of ignorance and soon afterwards repent: these are the ones God will forgive, he is all knowing, all wise. It is not true repentance when people continue to do evil until death confronts them and then says, 'Now I repent'… (4:16–18).

4.3.8 Intercession

There are two types of intercession. One type involves praying to Allah for someone for the benefit of that person, the other type involves praying to an intermediary so that the intermediary will pray to Allah. With regard to the second type of intercession, the Qur'an emphasises that there are no intermediaries between a person and Allah, and that intercession of this type is not allowed, at least not on the Day of Judgement (2:48, 2:254) and perhaps not otherwise either (6:51, 6:70, 32:4; 39:43–44). In Islam, people are to pray directly to Allah and only to Allah. Less clear, however, is the Qur'anic view toward praying for others (the first type of intercession described above). Several Qur'anic verses indicate that prophets prayed to God for others. Moses (PBUH) prayed to God for the people when they were hungry (2:61) and when there was a plague (7:134–135). The Prophet was also told by God to intercede for the people on several occasions (3:159, 4:64, 63: 5). Some verses suggest that Allah only permits certain people to intercede ('no one will have power to intercede except for those who have permission from the Lord of Mercy' 19:87), and only those with whom God is well pleased (53:26). Several Hadith have also been more tolerant with regard to the first type of intercession, emphasizing that the Prophet himself prayed for the well-being of others (Shahi Bukhari Sharif: 68).

4.3.9 The individual

The individual plays an important role in Islam. People have the responsibility to make life better for themselves and for others. At the same time, Muslims believe that the individual is still a human being and will continue to make mistakes in life. This should not cause a person to feel frustrated or affect their self-esteem since the nature of being human. But, Islam stresses that a person should learn from mistakes and tries to avoid them in the future. There is an understanding in Islam that people possess a range of weaknesses and strengths, but the goal is for each person to live the best life possible. Islamic beliefs (customs and societal rules) help to make a person feel more responsible, clear on his or her role, and valued as part of the community (Koenig & Al Shohaib, 2014: 34).

Despite having strong foundations of religious laws and beliefs, Islam as a religion is also divided in to sects like other religions of the world. These sects adopt their own interpretation of Islam. Therefore, the next section will briefly consider the Islamic sects differing views about Islam.

4.4 Islamic Fiqh (Sects)

Islam is divided into three branches. The majority of Muslims (80%-90%) are Sunni, whilst Shia Muslims account for 10%-15%. The third branch, Sufism (5% of Muslims today) arose in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. Sufis can be either Sunni or Shia. Sufism represents the mystical arm of Islam, and emphasises reliance on the will of God and focusing attention on the inner self. It is recognised as the Islamic group most tolerant of other religions (Rahman, 1998:31).

The Sunni branch of Islam has four major schools of religious jurisprudence or law: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, and Hanbali. The Hanafi School (representing reason) is the largest, and most adherents live in southern Asia. Hanbali represents the most conservative school, whose adherents live primarily in Saudi Arabia. Wahhabi is a small branch of the Hanbali School. The more moderate Maliki School is widespread in northern and western Africa, while the Shafii School is more dominant in Malaysia and East Africa. The word Sunni refers to those who follow and maintain the teachings and actions (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Sunni Muslims revere Abu Bakr (PBUH) as the closest companion of the Prophet and consider him the first caliph (successor) after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Selected by a group of the Prophet's companions, Abu Bakr (PBUH) was the father-in-law of the Prophet and one of his closest friends. He was followed as caliph by Ibn al-Khattāb, Ibn Affan, and Ibn Abu Talib, and together makes up the four 'rightly guided caliphs' in the Sunni tradition (Koenig & Al Shohaib, 2016: 28-30).

Belief in the above successorship is one factor that distinguishes Sunni from Shia Muslims, the former believing that Prophet Ali (PBUH), the Prophet's son-in-law and cousin, was his rightful successor and first caliph. Conversely, Shia Muslims believe that only God has the right to choose a successor to the Prophet, since the successor is responsible for safeguarding Islam, the Qur'an, and sharia law. The origin of the split between Sunni and Shia is a complex one, based in part on this line of succession and who should be revered (Armstrong, 2002). The Shia branch consists of three major schools of jurisprudence: Twelver, Zaidi, and Ismaili. The Twelver school originated from the twelve imams (supreme religious–political leaders) in early Islam who are believed by adherents to be infallible (Rahman, 1998: 3). This school has the most adherents (85% of Shia Muslims) and makes up the majority of the population in Iran (90%), Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Bahrain. The Twelver's believe that the descendants of the Prophet through his daughter Fatima (PBUH) and son-in-law Ali (PBUH) are the best source of knowledge about the Qur'an and 'Shari'ah' (Islamic Law) and are those who are most worthy of respect and honour.

The religious practices of the Shiites are different from those of the Sunni. For devout Shiites, a pilgrimage to Mecca is the most important religious practice, but they also visit the tombs of the eleven earthly imams, and they frequently visit Iraq to visit the tomb of Ali (PBUH) in the city of Karbala, which is no less than a Mecca for Shiites (Pollock, 2002: 11). Additionally, the Hanafi and Hanbali schools of fiqh (Sect) do not allow a woman to travel alone for Hajj without a 'Mahram' (a mahram is a male relative of a woman whom she is forbidden to marry under Islam, including one's father, brother or son) based on the Sahih hadith, whereas, Shia women pilgrims under the Saudi regulations can perform Hajj without the company of a male mahram. However, Muslim scholars of both schools of thought (Sunni and Shia) differ in their opinions on whether or not it is obligatory for a woman to travel for Hajj with a Mahram (Khan, 2015).

Furthermore, in Islam, after the Quran the most authentic second source of Islamic teaching is the Hadith and Sunnah recorded after the Prophet's Mohammad (PBUH) death. The Hadith reports the sayings and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Sunnah (distinguished from the Hadith, although sometimes described as a type of Hadith) provides descriptions of the Prophet's life itself, and how he lived. While very important as a guide for living, the Hadith and Sunnah are not infallible like the Qur'an. There are six primary collections of Sunni Hadith:

  i.   Sahih Bukhari
 ii.   Sahih Muslim
iii.   Sunan Abu Dawood
 iv.   Sunan al-Sughra
  v.   Jami al-Tirmidhi
 vi.   Sunan ibn Majah

The above Hadith with 'Sahih' in their name are thought to be the most reliable and authentic (i.e. Bukhari and Muslim). There are also other collections of Sunni Hadith that contain authentic hadith but are used less frequently by Islamic scholars. These include the Musannaf of Abd al-Razzaq, Musnad, Mustadrak, Muwatta (Malik), Sahih Ibn Hibbaan, Sahih Ibn Khuzaymah, and Sunan al-Darimi.

In contrast, Shia Muslims do not follow the sixth Sunni Hadith, but instead have their own. The four major Shia Hadith collections (associated with the Twelvers school of jurisprudence) are:

  i.   Kitab al-Kafi
 ii.   Man la yahduruhu al-Fqih

iii.   Tahdhib al-Ahkam

iv.   Al-Istibsar

The above primary Hadith collections are written by three authors known as the 'Three Muhammads': Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni al Razi, Muhammad ibn Babuy, and Shaykh Muhammad Tusi.

The differences between Sunni and Shia Hadith are based on their respective scholars' beliefs in the reliability of the narrators (early companions reporting the sayings of the Prophet) and transmitters (those who collected these reports). In the Sunni tradition, Muhammad al-Bukhari is considered to be by far the most reliable of the transmitters. Because of this, and because 85%-90% of Muslims are Sunni, they frequently cite the Hadith collected by al-Bukhari.

Along similar lines, the Sunni Hanabli branch of Islam (Wahhabi or Salifie) differs from the other three Sunni major schools of thought, namely, Hanafi, Maliki and Shafii. For instance, the Hanabli branch of Islam (Wahhabi or Salifie) labels factions of the Hanafi school of thought as grave or cemetery churchgoers (Koenig & Al Shohaib, 2016: 32-38). Hanafi, however, claim that it is a misguided routine of the Wahhabi sect to accuse them in this way. They argue that Wahhabis, also known as 'Salafi', make such uninformed remarks due to the lack of knowledge they take from their predecessors (Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab). Generally, they try to comprehend Quran and Hadith according to their own understanding rather than following the explanations given by the Salaf (predecessors), yet they call themselves Salafi.

Although the differences that separate the two largest branches of Islam, namely, Sunni (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali) and Shia, are numerous and complicated, many of the beliefs and traditions of Sunni and Shia Muslims are in fact similar. Therefore, a further discussion of the distinctions between the two is beyond the scope of this thesis although it should be noted that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is predominantly a follower of Wahhabi or Salafi philosophy. Moreover, despite the differing ideologies amongst the Islamic sects, there is consensus with respect to performing Hajj. Therefore, the next section turns specifically to a consideration of the Hajj.

4.5 Pre-Islamic phase of the Hajj

Arabian residents practiced the Hajj since 3000 years prior to the initiation of Islam, although not in the manner of Abrahamic teachings as currently applied. The Prophet

Ibrahim (PBUH) rebuilt the Kaaba for the refuge of Allah's followers and their security but, following his death, it was taken over by other Arab tribes and it was adapted as a pantheon in which revered statues were placed. There is consensus among Islamic historians that 'Amr ibn Luhäyy' was the first Arabian who brought sculptures to Mecca and subsequently played vital role in transforming the faith of Meccans. The statue of Hubal was considered to be the chief God and was, therefore, placed on the top of the Kaaba (Ahmad. A. Galwash, 1966: 24) whilst some 360 statues placed inside it. However, the Quran mentions only 'Ten Idols', of which eight are named, as follows: Allat, Alcuzza, Manät, Wadd, Siwac, Yaguwt, Yacuwq, and Nsra (The Qur'an. 71: 21-23).

The Meccan pagans held a morning prayer in front of the Kaaba and tolerance was shown to them; everybody took postures of respect, bending or prostrating as one preferred. There were two statues in front of the Kaaba, one of a man ('Isaf') and the other of a woman ('Näila'). Inside the Kaaba, there were fresco paintings, including those of Ibrahim and of the Virgin Mary with baby Jesus (PBUH). The presence of Ibrahim is proof that pre-Islamic Meccans knew him and honoured him. But, as mentioned above, Luhayy changed their beliefs from Ibrahim's faith, and Mecca became sacred pagan in Arabia, and continued to play this unchallenged role for a long time until the rise of Islam (Ahmad. A. Galwash, 1966: 25). In fact, Sayyid abd Allah and Mawdudi, Khurram Murad (1985: 254) state that:

> The degree to which Hajj was corrupted in that period of ignorance can be gauged from the fact that it degenerated into an annual carnival. The Hajj became an important social event for many Arabian tribes. Poets and clowns used the carnival to brag and boast about the bravery, renowned, dignity, strength and generosity of their tribes'.

In the pre-Islamic era, the Quraysh tribe was considered to be the strongest, and it endorsed many of the Hajj traditions at that time; indeed, they were also the custodians of pre-Islamic Mecca, whilst the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was born in Quraysh tribe. Interestingly, during the pre-Islamic era, the Quraysh did not permit pilgrims to bring their own food and beverages or to do trade of any kind of goods in Mecca. The Quraysh was divided into three groups, the Hames, the Hila and the Tals (Al-Azraqi, 1965:175), each adopting different rituals for the Hajj. For example, when participating in the Hajj, the Hames refrained from going into their houses through the doors as it was considered to be sinful. As long as they remained in the state of Ihram, they entered into their house by a hall or by scaling the walls. They put on their shoes

during the circumambulation of the Kaaba, as they believed that their feet must not touch the Holy places. In contrast, men and women from the Hila circled Kaaba naked, as consider that clothes in use were dipped in sins and, hence, not appropriate during circumambulation. Nevertheless, they would ask the Hames to offer them a Hames Holy cover, which they would sometimes be given. Moreover, according to Ibn Arabi (2004:179) while saying farewell to Hajj, Mecca and Kaaba, the Hila would sprinkle blood and throw the flesh of sacrificed animals on the Kaaba and offer prayers in front of their idols.

Similarly, the Tals tribe's pilgrims had their own way of performing the ritual. Ibn Arabi (2004:142) observes that they circumambulated the Kaaba wearing shoes and clothes, and stood with all other Arabian tribes at the field of Arafat and Muzdalifa. At sunrise, they would move to Mina, where the sacrificing of animals took place.

However, the current Hajj which is based on the teaching of Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is completely different from its pre-Islamic history. Therefore, the next section will consider the current practice of the Hajj.

4.6 The Islamic Hajj

According to lunar calendar of Sharia (Islamic law), the Hajj takes place between the 8th and12[th] of the Islamic month called Dü al-ijja. However, the last three months of Islamic lunar calendar, called Shawwal, al-Qada and al-Hijja, are also considered to be the months of the Hajj, although the Quran does not state exactly which month it is. Currently, the date of the Hajj is typically determined by Saudi Ministry of Hajj.

At the day of the Hajj while pilgrims proceed towards Mecca, they recite the following verse, also known as 'Talbiya' …

لَبَّيْكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَبَّيْكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ لَبَّيْكَ إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ وَالنِّعْمَةَ لَكَ وَالْمُلْكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ

Labbayka Allahumma labbayka labbayka lä sarika laka labbayka. 'Inna al-hamda wa- al-nicmata wa al-mulka laka. lä sartka lak' (Muhammad Mahmud al-Sawwäf, 1987: 75-78).

The interpretation of above verse is: ''I am at your service, Allah! I am at your service, you have no associate, and I am at your service. Yours is the praise (commendation-thanks) and yours the favour (blessing-benefaction) and yours the Kingdom, you have no associate' (Al-Geyoushi, 1985: 9-10).

In brief, the present ideology of the Hajj dates back to when the Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) was given the task of leading mankind and was ordered by Allah (God) to go to Mecca (Johnson, 2010: 42). The day the Prophet arrived in Mecca, Allah commanded him to abandon his wife, the Prophet Hagar (PBUH), and his first born son Ishmael (PBUH) in a rocky deserted valley. The Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) obeyed and took Allah's order as an honour and left Prophet Hagar (PBUH) and her son Prophet Ishmael (PBUH) in the desert. Soon, her stock of dates and water was exhausted; both mother and son became thirsty. Prophet Hagar (PBUH) ran seven times between the sacred hills of 'Al-Safa and Al-Marwah' located within the current city of Mecca but found nothing. However, close to where Prophet Ishmael (PBUH) was resting, water sprang from the earth by the command of Allah. This source of water became the miracle Holy water of 'Zam Zam' in Mecca, and still runs today. Allah was highly pleased by the commitments of the Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) and commanded him to construct the house of Allah, called the Kaaba, the cubical structure in the Holy City of Mecca referred to previously (O'Connor, 2010: 11-13). The Kaaba has a vital role in the lives of Muslims; it represents the third pillar of Islam, or 'Salah', which means praying five times a day facing towards the Kaaba wherever they are in the world. In addition, the fifth pillar of Islam, the Hajj, could not be performed without the Kaaba as pilgrims have to perform a circumambulation of it seven times. Besides the religious emblematic value of the Kaaba, it is vital to keep in mind that no pilgrim should endow it with power to benefit or to hurt (Sardar et al., 1978).

Furthermore, after the completion of the Kaaba, Allah ordered the Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) to call mankind to pay pilgrimage, to visit Mecca and the Kaaba. However, with the passage of time, both the method and the goal of the Hajj were changed. Idolatry spread throughout Arabia, the Kaaba lost its purity and idols were placed inside it (Sardar et al., 1978).

Timothy and Olsen (2006) relate that the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), born in 570 A.D. in Mecca, was meditative and curious regarding the idolatry that then represented domestic religion, and that he often spent time in the caves of Mecca where he could think and concentrate. In 610 A.D, the angel Gabriel visited to him in the caves, bringing revelations from Allah. The angel requested the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) to read and preach Allah's Message to the public. Later, these revelations were recorded in verses and chapters to form the Holy Book called the Quran - the book from Allah. When the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) started to preach Islam in Mecca, the population who had faith in idolism became his rivals. Later, in 622 A.D., the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) left Mecca with his followers for the Holy City of Medina

(Timothy, 1999). This migration to Medina marks the beginning of the Islamic lunar calendar, which differs from the Gregorian calendar (Brown, 2004: 64). Subsequently, in 629 A.D., the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) victoriously returned to Mecca as a pilgrim and destroyed all the idols placed in the premises of Mecca (Long, 1979: 162). This act of purification cleansed the Abrahamic holy sites of pagan gods and rituals and provided the basis of the Islam in Mecca. Later, the fifth pillar of Islam, the Hajj, was declared and over time became the largest Islamic religious ritual practice in the world and, indeed, the world's largest religious tourism activity.

Geographically, Mecca is surrounded by the sacred area called Haram, which includes other important locations including Arafat, the tent city of Mina where pilgrims stay for three days, sacrificing animals and stoning devils, and the nearby field of Muzdalifa where pilgrims collect pebbles to stone the devil near Mina (Robinson, 1999: 86). After performing all the rituals at Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifa, the pilgrims return to the Mosque al Haram for the circumambulation of the Kaaba (Rinschede, 1992: 56). Three million Muslims took part in the circumambulation of the Kaaba in 2011 (Mintel, 2012). Pilgrims who have performed all the rituals of the Hajj are designated as 'Hajji', which is a symbol of respect in the Islamic world (Bloom et al., 2000).

Another religious tourism activity also occurs in Mecca, namely, Umrah. This is not a compulsory religious duty like the Hajj but is nevertheless encouraged amongst Muslims as a devotion to Allah, (Ghazanfar, 2004: 140). Umrah is an identical ritual to the Hajj but, unlike the Hajj, is not required to be performed at a designated time (Buchele, 2010: 16). Rather, Umrah can be performed at any time, but the same special clothes (Ihram) should be worn and it can only be performed in the premises of Mosque Al-Haram Kaaba in Mecca. The rituals at Mina, Mount Arafat and Muzdalifa are also exempted. Remarkably, up to half a million pilgrims perform Umrah during the single Holy month of Ramadan (Mintel, 2012).

An overview of the Hajj is incomplete without a brief history of Mecca itself, the location of the Hajj. Therefore, this is the focus of the next section.

4.7 Holy Mecca
Mecca, with more than 2 million inhabitants, is the capital city of one of thirteen provinces of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Mahmoud & Plumb, 2010). The holy city's importance far outweighs its size on account of both its status as the capital of Islam, and also because it enjoys the privilege of hosting the annual pilgrimage the Hajj, for more than 1,430 years the fifth of the five mandatory Pillars of Islam (Gwyn, 1989).

In the Arabic language, Mecca literally means weak, tired or the place with no water (Al-Azraqi, 1965). Mecca used to be known as 'Bakka'; 'Baak' means to cry, to smash, or be submissive (Ahmad al-Sarif, 1965), whilst some observers conventionally relate the name to the Valley of Bakka, or the 'valley of the one who weeps much' (Ahmad al-Sarif, 1965; Gibson, 2011). Mecca is referred to in the Quran as the holy location of the Kaaba, also known as 'house', but under five different names: Makka, Bakka, Umm Al-Qura, Al-Balad and Al-Qarya. Some philosophers identify more names from the Qur'an, such as Al-Balad, Al-Amin, Al-Baldah, Macäd, Al-Masjid, Al-Bayt Al-Atiq and Al-Masjid al-Hardm (Kahhdla, 1964: 101). Additionally, the origin of word Mecca could be Assyrian or Babylonian as in the Babylonian language Mecca means 'the house', pointing to the holy origins of the city (Kahhdla, 1964: 103).

Historically, the Al-Amäliq tribe were considered to be the first residents of the Mecca, later succeeded by the 'Jurhum' tribe from Yemen who controlled Mecca for a long time. Later, northern Yemeni tribes took two words, 'Makk' (house) and 'Rab' (Allah-God) to create a new word, 'Makkrab', meaning Allah's House. Thus, two words have been shaped, namely, Mecca and Bacca, but with different northern Yemeni accents the word changed from Mecca to Bacca (Kahhdla, 1964:84).

Like Mecca's name, the establishment of the Kaaba is also debatable; some scholars argue it was initiated by angels twelve times (Ba-Salamah, 1981), whereas others claim it was built by the Prophet Adam (PBUH) when he was cast off from heaven and was roaming in the desert of 'Al-Hjaz' (currently Saudi Arabia, (Al-Azraqi, 1965). Yet other scholars however claim it was built by the Prophet Noha (PBUH) followed by Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH). However, Al-Resseeni (1992) believes that apart from the contribution of the above mentioned Prophets to building the Kaaba, both past and administrations / governments, such as Al-Sultan Murad Kan (the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1623 to 1640) added to its construction. Similarly, the current ruling Al-Saud family of KSA has further added to the construction of the Kaaba. It should be noted, however, that when Gibson (2011) questioned Saudi archaeologists during his survey of the archaeological records of Mecca and its surroundings, they confessed that there is no archaeological record of the city before 900 AD. Nevertheless, the Quran categorically mentions that Ibrahim rebuilt the Kaaba on its earlier foundations (Qur'an: 22: 26 and 2: 127), and this is considered by Muslims to be authentic evidence of the Kaaba's origins.

Thus, Mecca has long been an important religious centre, and the destination for religious tourists, or pilgrims undertaking the Hajj, for more than 25 centuries.

Nowadays, religious tourism to Mecca is both extensive and growing; at the same time, however, and as suggested in Chapter One of this thesis, recent years have witnessed significant investment in and development of facilities and services related to the Hajj in the Holy City. In short, and as the following section discusses, religious tourism in Mecca is becoming increasingly commodified.

4.8 The Commodification of Mecca and the Hajj

Hadith from Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him).

يحجُّ أغنياءُ أُمَّتي للنَّزهَةِ ويحجُّ أوساطُها للتَّجارَةِ ويحجُّ فُقَراؤُهم للرِّياءِ والسُّمعَةِ، فعِندَها يكونُ أقوامٌ يَتَعلَّمونَ القُرآنَ لِغيرِ اللهِ ويَتَّخِذونَهُ مَزاميرَ، ويكونُ أقوامٌ يَتَفقَّهونَ لِغيرِ اللهِ.

> Near the time Judgement Day, the rich ones from amongst my people will perform Hajj for the sake of travel and holidays. The middle class will perform Hajj for commercial purposes, thereby transporting goods from here to there while bringing commercial goods from there to here. The scholars will perform Hajj for the sake of show and fame. The poor will perform Hajj for the purpose of begging. (Tafsir al-Mizan, 1995: 434) and (Raj & Bozonelos, 2015: 40)

The above Hadith by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) is fundamental to this research. Even though it was written some twenty centuries ago, it predicts a transformation in the meaning of the Hajj and, in particular, its commodification.

Such a process of commodification is neither unusual nor a recent phenomenon; indeed, throughout history, religious tourism and pilgrimage journeys have been hubs of economic activity (Sharpley, 2009; Timothy, 2006; Vukonic, 1996). Rome, for example, was one of the first religious centres of global importance to recognise the economic potential of pilgrimage whilst, more generally, religious journeys have been big business for many years, particularly when local communities in religious destinations seek to take maximum economic advantage from the upsurge in visitors (Sizer, 1999). Currently, religious tourism is a major sector of the global tourism markets the annual number of pilgrimages is conservatively estimated to total 155 million (ARC, 2011) whilst more generally, the UN World Tourism Organisation suggests that '300 to 330 million tourists visit the world's major sites every year' (UNWTO, 2014). If other forms of religious tourism, as discussed in Chapter Two, are also taken into account, including both international and domestic activity, then the overall figures are likely to be significantly higher.

Owing to both definitional and other challenges, accurately measuring the scale of religious tourism is an almost impossible task. Nevertheless, according to Mintel (2012), international religious tourists alone have been estimated to total 28.5 million, generating some US$19 billion annually in expenditure. As a result, religious groups have long been involved in economically exploiting (or commodifying) their own religious sites (Vukonic, 1996, 2000; Choen, 1998; Olsen, 2003, 2011, 2016; Singh, 2006; Hung et al., 2017). In particular, pilgrims undertaking the Hajj are considered to represent one of the world's largest religious tourism gatherings and, perhaps not surprisingly, the residents of Mecca and others have long earned a living by serving the needs of Muslim pilgrims (Ahmed, 1992). There is, then, a need to identify the purposeful actions undertaken to convert religious symbols and institutions related to the Hajj into marketable and consumable commodities (Kitiarsa, 2010: 565). Hence, the following sections focus on developments, including accommodation and infrastructural (both physical and digital) in Mecca. In so doing they provide evidence of the practical commodification of religious tourism, specifically the Hajj, in Mecca. First, however, it is important to highlight the scale and value of religious tourism in the KSA.

4.8.1 Religious tourism to Saudi Arabia.

According to Smith (2016), the tourism industry as a whole currently generates about 2.4% of Saudi Arabia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a contribution which is expected to rise to 5.7% by 2020, with religious pilgrims making up the largest group of visitors to the Kingdom. In 2016, KSA invested more in its travel and tourism sector than any other country in the region or world (see Table 4.1).

In 2010, the KSA earned US$9 billion revenue from religious tourism (Travel Talk Middle East, 2010); by 2012, this had risen to US$16 billion. More than twelve million pilgrims visit the holy cities of Mecca and Medina annually, with the numbers expected to increase to 17 million by 2025 (Al Arbiya News, 2012). This growth has been supported over the past 30 years by more than US$35 billion investment not only to improve facilities for pilgrims but to diversify so as to gain maximum economic advantage from religious tourism (Vijayanand, 2012). As a consequence, some commentators have started calling Mecca 'the Vegas of the Middle East' (Taylor, 2011; Wainwright, 2015).

Table: 4.1: Travel & Tourism Investments (2016, US $Billion**)**

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	28.6
United Arab Emirates	7.1
World Average	*4.4*
Middle East Average	3.8
Iran	3.5
Qatar	1.7
Jordan	0.9
Oman	0.7
Bahrain	0.4
Kuwait	0.4
Yemen	0.2
Syria	0.1

Source: World Travel & Tourism Council (2017)

The economic impacts linked with religious tourism are greater than those related to most other market sectors in the country; indeed, the KSA government claims that the economic contribution of religious tourism is far superior to any other industry in the country with, of course, the exception of the oil industry (Fleischer, 2000; RT NEWS, 2016; Saudi Gazette, 2016). However, current instability in the price of and demand for oil, as well as uncertainties with regards to the future of oil markets is of increasing concern (Wong, 2016). Hence, in order to stimulate further growth in religious tourism arrivals and earnings, in 2010 the Saudi government sanctioned an additional $88 billion in the sector, the aim being to further develop hospitality and tourism infrastructure with the specific target of having 343,000 branded hotel rooms by the end of 2015, compared with 250,000 in 2011 (HVC Hotel Survey, 2012). The overall purpose of this investment was to increase the number inbound pilgrims by 6% annually. Al-Jazeera Capital (2015) suggests that hotel stocks in the KSA have already entered double digit growth owing to religious tourism, despite worldwide recession (Collier International, 2016).

In contrast, however, despite this heavy investment, the number of pilgrims has actually been unstable in recent years after achieving a record 3.16 million in 2012, with inevitable impacts on revenues earned from Hajj. The numbers of pilgrims and the revenue earned by Hajj can be seen in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Numbers of pilgrims (Million) and Revenues (US$ Billion)

2005:	2.26				2012:	3.16 ($16 Billion Revenue)
2006:	2.38	(> 0.12%)	Revenue		2013:	1.98 (Revenue Not Available)
2007:	2.45	(> 0.07%)	NOT		2014:	2.90 ($8.5 Billion Revenue)
2008:	2.41	(< 0.04%)	Available		2015:	2.95 ($14 Billion Revenue)
2009:	2.31	(< 0.1%)			2016:	1.8 (Revenue Not Available)
2010:	2.79	(> 0.48%)			2017:	2 (Revenue Not Available)
2011:	2.93	(> 0.14%)			**Target: 17 million pilgrims by the end of 2025**	

Source: Saudi Arabian Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (2016)

The instability in the numbers of pilgrims and revenues in recent years can be explained in part by the extensive construction projects that have been undertaken in Mecca since 2010 and, in particular, to negative publicity surrounding construction-related incidents. There have been many reports of minor accidents related to construction activity during Hajj but, most significantly, in 2015 a major crane collapse occurred on the eastern side of Mecca's Grand Mosque, leaving more than 87 people dead and 201 people injured (The Guardian, 2015). In the same year, a stampede occurred near Jamarat Bridge (Devil Bridge) in which more than 2000 pilgrims lost their lives, including 400 Iranians. As a consequence, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei accused the 'heartless and murderous Saudis' of deliberately causing the death of Iranian pilgrims in the 2015 crush (Independent, 2016b) and, the following year, Iran boycotted the Hajj, refusing to allow its pilgrims to attend. In response, the Saudi Interior Minister, Mohammed bin Nayef, said Iran was attempting to 'politicise' the Hajj and reaffirmed the country's commitment to preventing accidents and to keeping pilgrims safe during the Hajj (Independent, 2016b).

Nevertheless, pilgrims from other nations did not attend the Hajj over fears related to construction and the political situation in Mecca, resulting in lower numbers in 2016, (Gaurdian, 2016; Independent, 2016a).

Despite these setbacks, the commodification of Mecca continues apace, with continued rapid and extensive development of accommodation facilities, transport infrastructure, including ports, roads, trains and airports, and telecommunication services. Therefore, the following section considers hospitality and tourism infrastructure development in Mecca in detail.

4.8.2 Hospitality infrastructure developments in Mecca

Jafari and Scott (2010) argue that the significant growth in the number of religious pilgrims during the first decade of the new millennium and the commercial opportunities it offered was a key driver in the decision by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage to develop new hotels and to extensively renovate existing hotels. The plan offers support to the hospitality and tourism sectors both within the holy cities and across the Kingdom as a whole.

According to a National Commercial Bank Report (2009) on the Saudi hotel industry, occupancy rates in star rated hotels in Mecca increased from 36.4% in 2001 to 55% in 2008. In addition, the report highlighted that over the same period, the average room rate in Mecca more than doubled from $159.9 in 2001 to between $320 and $400 in 2008. As might be expected, revenue per available room in Mecca improved by 32.7% in the first quarter of 2009, which commentators believe is unparalleled in such a short span of time. A year-on-year comparison of hotel room occupancy between 2010 and 2011 is shown in Table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3: Year-on-year comparison of hotel room occupancy, 2010-11

	2010				**2011**			
Month	Room occupancy Rate (%)	Numbers of rooms sold	Bed occ Rate (%)	Numbers of Beds sold	Room occupancy Rate (%)	No of rooms sold	Bed occ Rate (%)	No of Beds sold
January	50.2	2,345,852	45.3	6,175,511	54.1	2,642,006	55.9	5,454,068
February	51.01	2,131,856	45.8	5,658,803	54.9	2,507,674	54.2	4,946,880
March	59.5	2,736,531	51.0	7,042,329	63.8	3,114,639	61.6	6,016,313
April	59.8	2,662,345	55.3	7,260,191	64.0	3,020,295	65.1	6,145,250
May	49.6	2,218,944	41.3	5,346,786	53.3	2,600,611	50.3	4,907,280
June	57.6	2,574,864	49.0	6,547,848	61.08	2,920,626	58.3	5,509,747
July	57.6	2,599,587	51.5	6,944,776	61.7	3,008,842	60.7	5,924,495
August	71.4	3,347,263	66.6	9,114,424	73.9	3,606,661	76.3	7,448,356
September	75.0	3,469,143	66.1	9,257,353	80.0	3,778,936	78.0	7,371,552
October	56.9	2,608,070	50.6	6,791,001	60.6	2,959,444	59.9	5,849,363
November	64.5	2,928,625	56.3	7,694,39	68.8	3,248,950	66.9	6,317,607
December	56.0	2,453,610	49.0	6,322,560	59.6	2,910,415	58.4	5,702,001
Year Average	59.1	32,076,690	52.3	84,155,973	63.4	36,319,099	62.1	71,592,912

Source: Mintel (2012)

The report from the National Commercial Bank (2009: 54) referred to above revealed that between 2001 and 2009, the average room occupancy rate increased at the rate of

44.8% annually; between 2010 and 2011, Mecca experienced an upsurge of over 4 million rooms sold. Similarly, hotel room occupancy figures for 2011 show that an average rate of 63.0% was achieved for the year, with the highest rate (80%) recorded in September a period that included the end of the summer season and the fasting month of Ramadan. Occupancy rates were also high in November during Hajj, with 68.8% achieved.

The statistics demonstrate that religious tourism is one of the main drivers of growth the tourism industry in the KSA. According to a report by Jeddah Chamber of Commerce (2016: 8), the tourism industry in the KSA in 2015 was valued at US$21.33 billion with the religious tourism sector accounting for US$5.68 billion. The country attracted 19 million religious visitors in 2015, and the report suggests that the sector has the potential to grow by 5.7% and to create 400,000 more jobs by 2020. Moreover, the holy sites of Mecca and Madinah are expected to attract between 25 and 30 million visitors annually by 2025. As a consequence, religious tourism is expected to contribute between 5.4% and 5.7% to the country's total non-oil GDP.

The actual and predicted figures for the hospitality sector in general and religious tourism in particular is impressive, yet the extent to which the commodification of religious tourism in Mecca is occurring can be ascertained from recent evidence of market performance in the accommodation sector. Specifically, Colliers (2017) report that Mecca enjoyed a significant year-on-year increase in Q2 of 2016 in both occupancy and average daily rates, the latter reaching US$600 to US$700 in the branded hotel market during the Hajj. In the month of June 2016 alone, the market achieved occupancy of 80.7%, representing a 24% increase for the same month in 2015. Similarly, during the Holy Month of Ramadan, the average daily rate reached US$ $467, representing a 70% year-on-year increase from 2015. The holy city of Madinah also experienced an increase in average daily rates and occupancy levels, though not as significant as those in Mecca.

Arguably, it is not by chance that the some of the world's most profitable hotels are situated in the holy city of Mecca (Khalid, 2016). As discussed earlier in this chapter, for more than fifteen centuries Muslims from around the world have been travelling to Mecca for the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages. Nowadays, not only does the city attract the highest number of inbound foreign visitors in the KSA as a whole but also it is arguably the most attractive hotel investment opportunity available in the Middle East (Khalid, 2016). Indeed, Rizat (2010) notes that the KSA has issued licences for the construction of 500 hotels near the Grand Mosque in the Holy City of Mecca, with future plans

prioritising the development of larger hotels with one offering 10,000 rooms (the Abraj Kudai; see Figure 4.4 below). Khalid (2016) identifies six reasons for the boom in the hospitality industry in both Mecca and Madinah:

i. The KSA intends to triple the number of Umrah and Hajj visas, and the number of religious pilgrims is expected to rise to 17.5 million by 2025.

ii. Increasing the number of hotels will promote the KSA government's policy of Saudiasiation (jobs for Saudi nationals only).

iii. In 2015, some 9.4 million pilgrims travelled to the KSA for the Umrah and Hajj. Mecca and its hospitality sector faces the opportunity of a virtually unlimited demand curve and is a proxy for rising affluence, middle class population growth and wealth creation in the KSA, the Gulf and the entire Islamic world. This renders Mecca's hotel micro-markets the most attractive investment in the world for a regional or global investor.

iv. The KSA government has initiated a number of infrastructure and transport initiatives that only enhance the risk/reward calculus of hotel development in Mecca. For example, the Kingdom plans to spend $80 billion in the continued expansion of the Grand Mosque so that it can accommodate up to 2.2 million worshippers.

v. The KSA's planned expansion of the Grand Mosque and increase in foreign pilgrimage visitor quotas is complemented by more than $100 billion investments in the transport infrastructure in the country. For example, the expansion of the Haramein high speed rail link between Mecca, Madinah and the international airport in Jeddah (due to be fully operational in 2018) and the increase in the airport's capacity to accommodate 30 million passengers will anchor the rise in pilgrims seeking hotel accommodation in Mecca.

vi. Property market investment necessitates sophisticated supply-demand models and real time analysis. Mecca's hospitality sector had the world's most attractive supply-demand metrics in 2016. Recent large scale demolitions have eliminated 26,000 rooms in Mecca while there is a chronic shortage of four-star hotel rooms which account for just 11% of total supply in a market where international hotel branded rooms also account for just a third of total supply. Hence, as demand rises owing to the increase in visa issuance, further hotel development will be required.

To summarise, the current policy in the KSA /Mecca is to increase the number of high-rated, branded hotels. Given the predicted rise in demand over the coming years, a rise in occupancy rates and the pricing power of these branded hotels is inevitable,

arguably providing revenues per room and gross operating margins that will be significantly higher than in the hospitality sectors in other majors cites around the world Therefore, additional accommodation capacity is expected to increase annual. Indeed, annual revenues from the Hajj and Umrah are expected to be more than100 Billion Saudi Riyal (US$27 billion) in the future (Travel Market, 2011).

HVC Hotel Survey (2012) similarly notes that despite the Arab Spring in the region, the KSA is investing billions in major tourism and hospitality infrastructure projects with an additional 24,000 hotel rooms and serviced apartments, some of which are already under construction.

A number of construction projects can be seen in Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 below:

Figure 4.1: Hotel construction in Mecca

Photo: Author

Figure 4.2: Hotel construction in Mecca
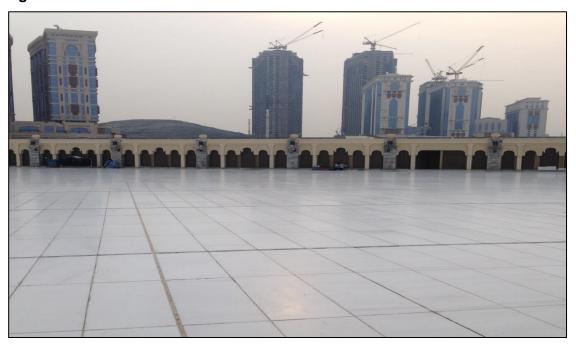
Photo: Author

Figure 4.3: Mecca Royal Clock Tower Hotel

Photo: Author

Figure 4.3 above illustrates a large hotel in Mecca, the Mecca Royal Clock Tower which was opened in 2010 by Fairmont Group. The MEED Middle East Economic Digest (2010) notes that the Mecca Royal Clock Tower, built close to the Mosque al Haram, stands an impressive 485 metres high; it dwarfs Big Ben in London, and offers Mecca Time to all pilgrims. Salman (2011) argues that this edifice signifies a new period for Mecca and is symbolic of the growth of the religious tourism industry in the KSA. The Clock Tower is also a pivotal element in the Abraj Al Bait Complex, a part of KSA vision 2030 programme from the custodian of two holy Mosques (terminology the Saudi King uses in the context of two Holy Mosques), a King Abdul Aziz- supported project which consists of luxury hotels, malls and apartments, with an assessed value of $3bn, with 15,000 housing units and 70,000 square metres of retail space.

According to the Telegraph (2017), the world's largest hotel – which will boast a colossal 10,000 rooms – could open in Mecca as early as 2018. The Abraj Kudai (see Figure 4.4) is being constructed a mile south of the world's largest mosque and Islam's most sacred site, the Masjid al-Haram. Allegedly modelled on a 'traditional desert fortress', it will feature luxury rooms for wealthy pilgrims, a private wing for the Saudi royal family, shopping malls, numerous restaurants and a lavish ballroom.

Figure 4.4: The Abraj Kudai, the world's largest hotel

Source: The Telegraph (2016)

Further details are as follows:

- The total number of rooms: 10,000
- Twelve towers, ten of which will feature four-star accommodation; the remaining two will be for five-star guests
- The tallest towers will comprise 45 storeys, the lowest will have 30
- Five levels will be reserved solely for the use of the Saudi royal family
- It will feature at least four helipads and seventy restaurants
- The cost to build: US$ 3.5billion
- The footprint of the building: 64,000 m²
- Total floor area: 1,400,000 m²

As such, the Abraj Kudai perhaps epitomises the commercialisation / commodification of religious tourism in Mecca, representing as it does the potential transformation of the

pilgrimage experience. Interestingly, according to The National Business (2017), the economic investment in both holy cities in the KSA is so intense that the hospitality and tourism sectors in the Kingdom's other main cities, including the capital Riyadh and Jeddah, have experienced a slowdown in their growth. During the second quarter of 2016, for example, average occupancy rates in Mecca and Madinah rose by 13% and 4% year-on-year, respectively, while those in Riyadh and Jeddah declined by 12% and 4%, respectively (Collier international, 2016). The average daily rate also suffered in Riyadh, declining by11%, during the second quarter, year-on-year. As already noted, during June 2016 Mecca hotels also reported a 24% increase year-on-year in the average occupancy rate to touch 80.70% (Collier international, 2016). According to latest figures by Collier international, about 89% of the properties in Mecca are 4 stars properties with remaining being 5 and 3 star properties. Owing to this intense commodification, international investors are rushing to the holy cities. By 2020, Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG) expects to be the largest operator in Mecca with 7,224 rooms (Gulf News, 2015 & The National, 2016) followed by Hilton Group (4,387 rooms) (Oxford Business Group, 2015) and Saudi Arabia's Elaf's Hotel Group with 3,875 rooms (The National, 2017) (See Figure 4.5).
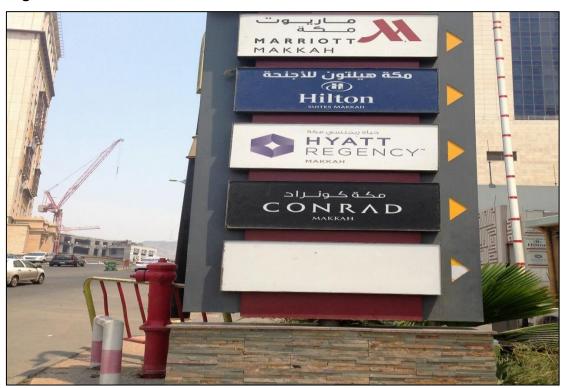
Figure 4.5: Construction site of branded hotels in Mecca

Photo: Author

Thus, Mecca remains the focal point for development in the KSA, largely as a result of the predicted growth in religious tourism and the opportunities offered by the world's

most capitalised and expensive real estate (World Report International, 2010). Indeed, Mecca's development authority approved a 23-year long master plan of the city, which includes accommodating three million Saudis, expatriates and eight million religious pilgrims.

4.8.3 Other infrastructural development projects

Sell (2009) notes that even during the recessionary period following the global economic crisis of 2008, the renaissance of Mecca contrasted with the financial prudence in evidence in other parts of the KSA, whist other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries were also suffering from the effects of the crisis. Many construction projects within KSA and across the region were put on hold yet Mecca's expansion continued briskly, and still does. Yes, as suggested above, the real estate market in Mecca cannot be compared with that in other cities in the region given the driving force of religious tourism activities. Currently, a number of other major other tourism infrastructure projects are underway, including the extension of Jeddah Airport (a $7.2 billion project to eventually increase capacity up to 100 million passengers a year) and a mass transit system (the $16.5 billion Mecca Metro).

Specifically, since 2003 the KSA has been extending Jeddah's airport. With four phases planned, the overall aim is to provide maximum comfort for Mecca's pilgrims; the first phase has been completed, increasing the capacity from 15 million to 30 million passengers annually. The Haramein high speed rail link extension between Mecca and Medina, linking into the local mass rapid transit within Mecca, is also underway. The 18km Southern Line 1 of the Al Mashaar and Al Mugadassah Metro opened on the 13th November 2010 with nine stations connecting the Holy places of Mina, Muzdilfa and Mount Arafat (Railway Gazette International, 2010) – see Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6: Mecca Metro

 Photo: Author

Further extensions to the mass transit system will link to the Grand Mosque of Al
Haram with a further four lines under construction, including a Jeddah Airport to Mecca
link (Khalid, 2016).

In addition, owing to the increase in the number of pilgrims visiting Mecca and the high
summer temperatures, the KSA is planning to expand the grand mosque Al-Haram and
also to install air conditioning in the Al-Haram Mosque. Redfern (2010: 32) notes that
current capacity is for 700,000 pilgrims offering prayers but following expansion, the
capacity will be raised to 2.2 million. Expansion also includes the hills of Al-Safa and
Al-Marwah with an increase in area from 29,000 square meters to 87,000 square
meters. This capacity enhancement allows more than 100,000 pilgrims to run between
two holy hills. However, to make the expansion possible more than one thousand
properties have been demolished (Vijayanand, 2012). This mega project also involves
the expansion of Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. The development will be spread over
an area of 1,020,500 square meters, with the mosque building itself occupying an area
of 614,800 square meters. The project will involve expansion of the northern side
sprawling 1,250,000 square meters of land (BNC for Stone & Surface Middle East,
2017).

The KSA is also developing a new city, King Abdul Aziz Economic City, which is
situated in Jeddah some 72km from Mecca, including with a 14 sq.km. seaport with the

capacity to handle up to 300,000 religious pilgrims arriving by sea, mostly from Middle East, South Asia, South East Asia and Africa (O'Pachler, 2008: 101). This new city also contains a business district, residential areas, an educational zone and seaside resorts. The main focus of the city, however, is to facilitate pilgrims and promote religious tourism, this further commodifying tourism by providing additional dimensions to the Kingdom's tourism infrastructure.

It is also important to note infrastructural developments are not limited to physical infrastructure; the KSA government is also promoting Smart Media Technologies (SMT) in order to both digitalise Hajj operations and to facilitate the experience of pilgrims.

4.8.4 The digital Hajj

Over the last two decades, information and communication technologies have advanced rapidly and continue to do so. Currently, the popularity and spread of SMART Media Technologies (SMT) is not only transforming the lives of tourists around the world in general, but is impacting on the experience of pilgrims on the Hajj in Saudi Arabia in particular (Brdesse et al., 2013). Indeed, the Saudi government has undertaken a number of initiatives to encourage the use of SMT in the religious tourism industry, to enhance both the operations of the event and the cyber experience of pilgrims undertaking the Hajj (Majid, 2016).

Just a decade ago, both the public and private sector telecom providers in Saudi Arabia lacked access to SMT services. However, the administration took vital steps to liberalise the Information Technology (IT) sector and to increase private sector and public sector engagement in this business, the aim being to increase the level of Internet use and computer penetration rate to 30% by 2013 (Amro, 2012). As a consequence, both the private and public sectors in Saudi Arabia are responding to the Information Technology challenge by dynamically accepting new SMT and capitalising in the telecom sector (Alzhrani, 2009).

This is very much the case in the religious tourism sector in particular; nowadays, SMT services, such as Hajj Apps (Naar, 2015), e-bracelets for pilgrims, free Wi-Fi services in the Grand Mosques, and the availability of dedicated social media Websites are facilitating pilgrims and enhancing their social experience of the Hajj (Naar, 2015; BBC, 2016), (see Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7: Smart Media Technology Tools in KSA

| **Hajj App** | **SIM CARD** | **E-BRACELET** | **SOCIAL MEDIA** | **INTERNET** |

Source: Google Image.
https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=SMART+MEDIA+TECHNOLOGY+IN+HAJJ&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiN14yKwLPVAhVLKcAKHUW1DCUQ_AUICigB&biw=1366&bih=662

Indeed, KSA has realised that a necessary new feature of the twenty-first century pilgrimage is increased online connectivity that pilgrims are able to utilise while performing their Hajj rites. During the Hajj of 2013, for example, Saudi Arabia's Mobily Telecommunications Company reported a 273% increase in data volume across their networks compared with the previous year. As part of the Hajj social responsibility programme, free Wi-Fi access is provided to pilgrims. Mobily also reported a 500% increase in the use of WhatsApp and large increases in other social networking platforms, such as Twitter, Face Time, Instagram, Face Book and so on (O'Connor, 2014: 317). Similarly, in 2014, Saudi Telecom invested approximately $300 million in the holy city of Mecca and recorded that, during the Hajj (STC, 2014).

- Data volume increased by 500%
- There was a 600% increase in the use of WhatsApp, IMO and other social networking platforms
- Domestic calls recorded in a six-day period: 2.4 Billion
- International calls recorded: 604 Billion
- Media corporate messages: 45 Million
- MMS and SMS recorded: 960 million
- Volume of data transferred by pilgrims: 6.2 thousand Terabytes
- Total pilgrims served in Mecca in 2013: 2.4 Million

Interestingly, the above statics relate to only the five official days of Hajj, and do not include other days of pilgrims spent in Mecca. Critically, since the Hajj has become 'high-tech', the nature of the pilgrims' experience is arguably being challenged, its fundamental spirituality being transformed it into something more akin to a 'cyber experience', an experience which competes with and jeopardises the principles of the Islamic religious journey of the Hajj with its focus on worship and simplicity. In essence, the spiritual experience of pilgrims may be negatively influenced by the availability and use of various SMT services. As seen in Figure: 4.8, a pilgrim is reciting a Holy Book of Quran but with his phone clearly in his view.
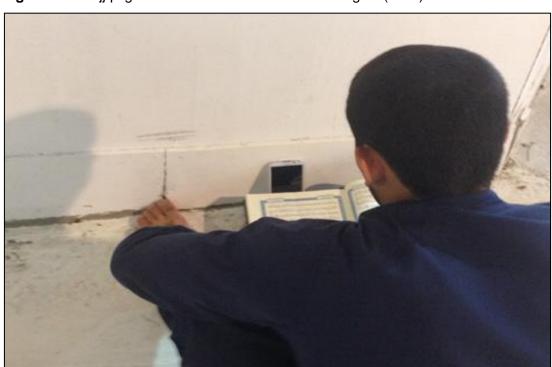
Figure 4.8: Hajj pilgrim versus Smart Media Technologies (SMT)

Photo: Author

At the same time, however, these technologies are also helping to reduce the chances of accidents occurring during the Hajj. For example, the Saudi authorities describe the water-resistant e-bracelets (see Figure 4.7) as GPS-linked devices for pilgrims containing personal identification (including passport numbers and addresses) and medical records that Saudi officials and security forces could access via smartphone, whilst personal information on each pilgrim would also be accessible (Hsu, 2016). These technologies are also facilitating the operations of the tour agents of Hajj, hotels, transport companies, government tourism department, and as well as the Hajj Ministry.

Importantly it is not only on-site that the Hajj is becoming commodified. Even, pilgrims are not allowed to design their own tailor-made Hajj tour or, more simply put, to travel independently. Rather, it is mandatory for pilgrims to purchase a Hajj 'packages' from Saudi-approved Hajj travel agents in the pilgrim's own country of origin, wherever they are residing in the world Therefore, the next section of this chapter discusses the Hajj package from both the Hajj agent's and the pilgrim's perspectives.

4.8.5 Packaging the Hajj

Owing to the increase in the volume of pilgrims travelling to Mecca, the KSA government established the Ministry of Hajj in 1961 (or 1381 A.H Islamic Calendar) to oversee the management and development of the event. One of the roles of the Ministry of Hajj is to issue licences to private tour companies both domestically and internationally. The domestic tour companies almost all originate from the tribes and families of Mecca whose ancestors offered services to pilgrims free of charge, and who now continue to facilitate the guest of the Allah, but by following the more recent concept of 'pay to pray' (Shackley, 2001; Woodward, 2004).

To understand the requirement for the Hajj to be packaged, it must be considered within the history of the KSA in general and within the context of the on-going challenges that the Kingdom is facing in terms of diversifying its non-oil based economy in particular (Burns 2007: 219). After the economic boom of the 1970s it became clear during a period of global recession that the population of Saudi Arabia was rising but youth unemployment was increasing and overall living standards were declining. Hence, by the early 1990s, the growth of tourism was recognised as having specific potential to address such problems (Sadi & Henderson 2005: 249, 256; Burns 2007; Park 1994).

However, other than religious tourism / pilgrimage, which currently represent the country's third largest economic sector the KSA does not benefit from a strong, more general international tourism sector (Burns, 2007: 229). To an extent, this reflects the fact that the hard-line Wahhabi religious establishment, which has conventionally legitimated KSA authority, has always been aggressive to Western cultural influence. Despite open criticism of the regime's 'hypocrisy' from transnational Islamists both within and outside the Kingdom, the monarchy still relies upon the loyalty of Wahhabi 'ulama' (religious scholars) to approve its managed version of Muslim modernity (Commins, 2012). Thus, together with private capital investment partners and supported by (until more recently) rising oil prices, since the early 2000s the Kingdom has been aggressively developing branded accommodation, retail and related services

in Mecca, with a view to significantly increasing pilgrim (and especially 'premium' pilgrim or 'branded' Hajj) numbers (Henderson, 2011: 541; Qurashi, 2017: 91).

Against this background, and irrespective of KSA attempts to monopolise or influence private commercial activities, many postcolonial Muslim powers in various nation-states continue to systematise, endorse and subsidise participation in the Hajj in order to claim their own Islamic legitimacy (Bianchi, 2004). In the absence of a Muslim state bureaucracy to manage such matters in the non-Muslim states of the West, however, up until the 1990's it was possible for pilgrims from Muslim diasporas in the West to organise their pilgrimage entirely independently. Indeed, while commercial tour operators began to appear in the 1990s, prior to that it was common practice for individuals to privately lead small groups. It still remains possible for pilgrims to book flights to Jeddah or Madinah independently but, since the mid-1990's, the Ministry of Hajj has insisted that pilgrims must now secure their accommodation and visas through an approved Hajj tour operator or agent (Maher, 2012), in effect requiring pilgrims to purchase the entire package, including flights, as a package.

Currently, every country has a number of approved Hajj agents according to the size and demand of the market. For example, there are around 92 approved Hajj tour operators in the UK in 2016 and listed on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabian Embassy in the United Kingdom:

http://embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/uk/EN/DiplomaticMissionServices/Consulates/ConsulatesServices/Hajj%20And%20Umra%20Services%20e/Pages/ukhajjagaencies1436.aspx.
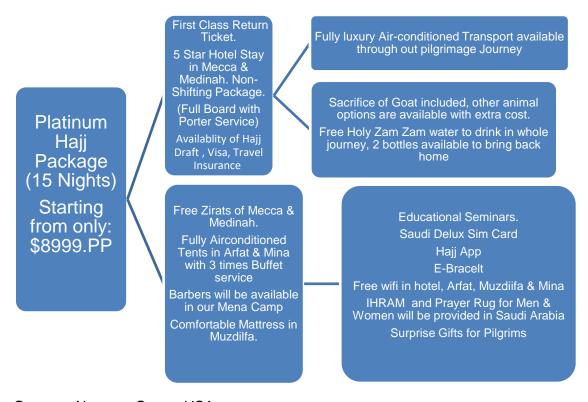
Such operators in UK must now take a minimum of 400 pilgrims, with an initial upper limit of 850 and an option to apply to operate in a higher band of 1000 to 5000 pilgrims (Saudi Ministry of Hajj). The Ministry used to accept tour operators with smaller numbers but it is now encouraging market consolidation and mergers as it is keen to deal with fewer, more established and larger, companies. Indeed, some US and UK-based tour operators have already begun to internationalise their business. All must travel to Saudi Arabia to present their credentials months in advance of the Hajj and to book hotels, most likely leasing an entire establishment for the season (Woodward, 2004).

Payments by operators are staggered but the total amounts involved, even at the mid-to lower end of the market, underline the scale of the capital investment now required

in the industry. For example, for one person in Mecca it costs roughly £2,000 for a season for one bed. Hence, much money is involved and there is also significant risk; at the minimum quota of 400 people, start-up costs for a tour operator are more than £500,000. Tour operators must also agree commercial contracts with a mu'alim (Official Saudi Hajj Guide) for the supply of transportation, visa sponsorship, tents, a four legged halal animal to sacrifice, plus food in the camps outside Mecca, Arafat, Muzdalifah and Mina.

Given, then, high costs involved, Hajj tour operators seek to attract a 'premium' market by mimicking sophisticated 'mainstream' holiday packages, appealing to the consumer as an individual but also providing the comfort of well-organised 'bureaucratic' formality, though often at a significant price to the pilgrim / customer. By way of illustration, examples of different standards of Hajj package tours are provides below, as follows:
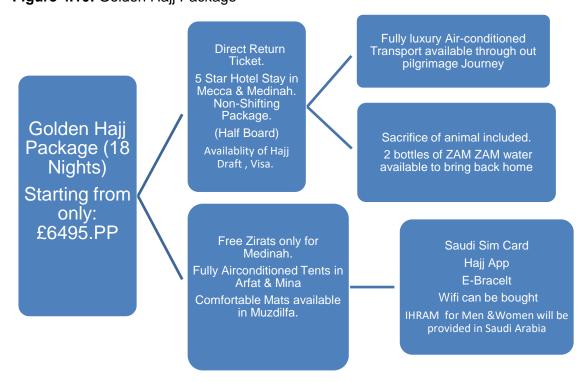
1. Platinum Hajj Package: (Figure: 4.9)
2. Golden Hajj Package: (Figure: 4.10)
3. 5 Star Hajj Package: (Figure: 4.11)
4. VIP Package: (Figure: 4.12)
5. Economy Package: (Figure: 4.13)

Figure 4.9: Platinum Hajj Package
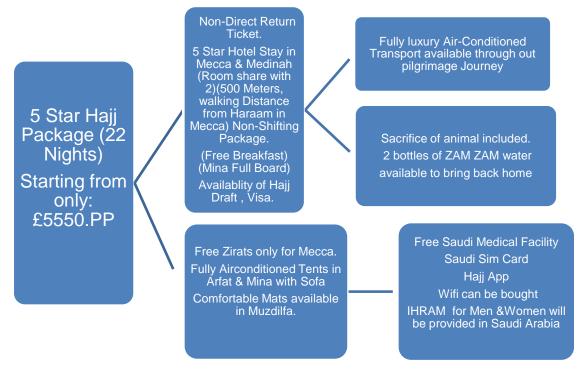
Source: Alemaan Group, USA

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Figure 4.10: Golden Hajj Package
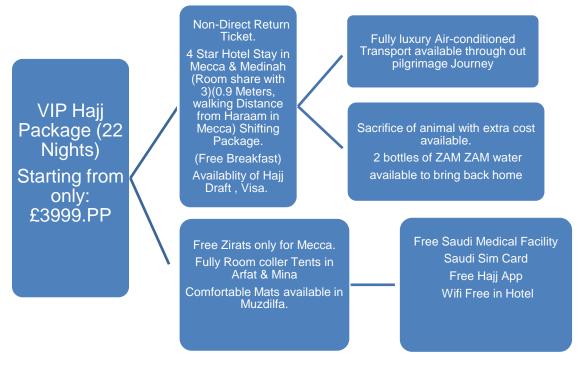
Source: British Hajj Travel, UK

Figure 4.11: 5 Star Hajj Package
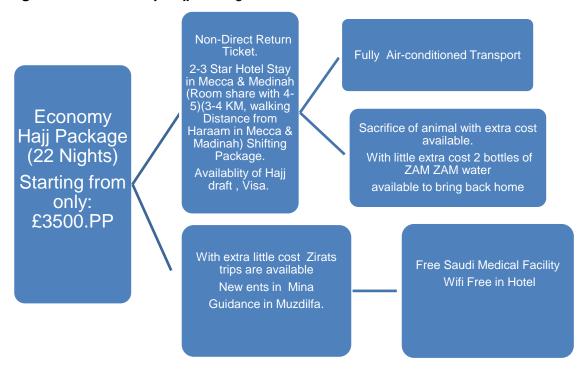
Source: Makkah Tours, UK.

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Figure: 4.12: VIP Hajj Package

Source: Al-Hijaz Travel, UK

Figure: 4.13: Economy Hajj Package

Economy Hajj Package (22 Nights) Starting from only: £3500.PP

Non-Direct Return Ticket. 2-3 Star Hotel Stay in Mecca & Medinah (Room share with 4-5)(3-4 KM, walking Distance from Haraam in Mecca & Madinah) Shifting Package. Availablity of Hajj draft , Visa.

Fully Air-conditioned Transport

Sacrifice of animal with extra cost available. With little extra cost 2 bottles of ZAM ZAM water available to bring back home

With extra little cost Zirats trips are available New ents in Mina Guidance in Muzdilfa.

Free Saudi Medical Facility Wifi Free in Hotel

Source: Euro Africa Travel, UK

It could be argued a normal Hajj package contains a bundle of amenities that are offered to pilgrims. A usual Hajj package includes the cost of a Saudi visa, round-trip airfare, airport services, hotel accommodation in Medina and Mecca, internal ground transportation (Mecca-Jeddah-Medina-Jeddah), and expert guide fees (Ladki et al., 2017) for which the pilgrim is expected to pay a minimum of £3500. However, when these normal elements in the packages are augmented with luxury services, the cost rises to US$7000 to US$9000.

When setting the price for a certain product or service, tour companies evaluate customers' perceived product value. Tour Operators design their market strategy to be perceived as high value and expensive or as a low price leader. Hajj tour packages follow product-bundling pricing techniques, where the bundle's price is less than the summation of the costs of offered products and services. To establish the price of a Hajj package, tour operators regulate the cost of each individual service in the bundle and add the desired mark up to reach their anticipated profit (Ladki et al., 2017: 21). Therefore, the price of Hajj tour packages has both direct and indirect determinants: The direct determinants include:

 i. Accommodation: this cost is determined by the quality of accommodation, which ranges from sleeping in tent cities that are a reasonable walking distance from the religious site, to a stay in three, four or five star hotels - where room occupancy varies

per hotel quality; it is also influenced by the number of pilgrims within the room. Residential leasing also exists, where a group of pilgrims lease the homes of local residents for a negotiated fee. Proximity of the accommodation location to the holy places in Medina and Mecca is also a factor.

ii. The cost of Saudi Visa (Price is depending on the processing speed of the Visa, for instance cheap Hajj Package 14 days, luxury Hajj package 1 day service.

iii. Air travel class (Economy, Premium economy, Business or First class)

iv. Quality and number of meals per day

v. Spiritual guided tours

vi. Type of animal for sacrifice

vii. Type of local Transportation

The indirect determinants include:

i. Fluctuations in currency valuation in selected countries.

ii. The varied license, and registration fees that governments of outbound tourists' charges o tour operators

iii. Employee customer services

iv. Marking costs

The above evidence indicates that not only is the Hajj packaged in a similar way to 'normal' holiday package; it is also marketed in a similar way, suggesting that pilgrims will be enjoying an authentic experience. For example:

'Experience 5 Star Hajj'

'Experience Deluxe Hajj'

'The Treasure of Middle East'

'Passport of Spirituality'   (Qurashi, 2017:94)

In the case of Hajj, the authenticity being promoted is related to pilgrims' expectations or, more simply, to what tour operators consider pilgrims perceive than to what really exists. Putting it another way, the promotion of the Hajj is little different from that of tourism more generally, where destinations are marketed to verify tourists' images and perceptions (Silver, 1993). For instance, Hajj operators characteristically promote the implied authenticity of the travel experiences they offer. Thus, the travel agents on-line or off-line promote their Hajj packages to potential pilgrims in the context of discovering something new, something that is not a product or commodity but an individual (authentic) experience. For example:

'Discover the spirituality of Mecca'

'Discover the 5 Star experience of Hajj'

'Your religious passport to Spiritual Service'

'Value for money & Peace of Mind'

'We take you closer to spiritual authentic experience'

'Not offering only spirituality but unforgettable religious experience' (Qurashi, 2017:94)

Nevertheless, Triantafillidou et al., (2009) suggest that it is not only tour operators that are creating the demand for luxury packages to tempt pilgrims to the pilgrimage journey of Hajj; it is also pilgrims' demands to consume high quality branded products.

4.9 Conclusion

It is evident from the discussion in this chapter that the traditional ritual of the Hajj is becoming subject to modernisation and commodification. Not only is the city of Mecca being transformed by extensive modernisation and infrastructural development, particularly in its tourism and hospitality sectors, but also participation in the Hajj has been commodified through the necessity for pilgrims to purchase organised Hajj packages.

Based upon the review of commodification and authenticity in Chapter Three, the implication is, of course, that this commodification is impacting negatively on the spiritual experience of pilgrims participating in the Hajj, that it is becoming an inauthentic touristic experience. The extent to which is the case is the overall focus of this thesis and is explored in the empirical research (see Chapter Six). First, however, the following chapter introduces and justifies the methodological approach and specific methods adopted in this research.

Chapter Five
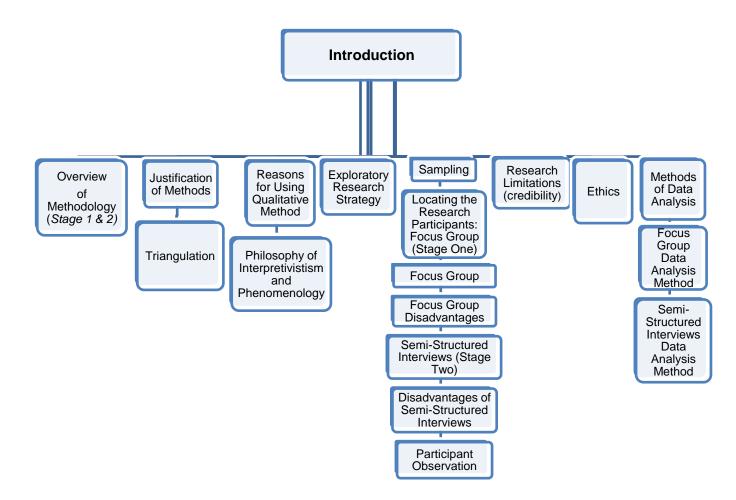
Research Methodology

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and justify the research philosophy adopted in this thesis, as well as to introduce and explain the specific research methods employed to meet the aims and objectives of the thesis as established in Chapter One. More precisely, the chapter considers qualitative research and the key philosophical elements of phenomenological and interpretivist research, the methodological approaches utilised here, explaining how these most effectively reflect the overall aim of the thesis, namely, to explore critically the commodification of Islamic religious tourism and its impact on the spiritual experience of the religious tourist / pilgrim and, in particular, the relationship between ritual and place.

As explained in Chapter One, this research is focused on the experience of the pilgrim, specifically in the context of the Hajj in Mecca in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The aim of the thesis is addressed initially through an exploratory Focus Group (FG) that provides the preliminary findings but also, significantly, establishes essential foundational data which is built upon and explored in more detail in the second stage of the empirical research. The scope of the study is then narrowed to the principal data collection method of semi-structured in-depth interviews, supplemented by participant observation of the roles and actions of pilgrims participating in the Hajj in 2016. The semi-structured interviews and participant observation explore critically the extent to which the contemporary commodification of the holy destination and ritual of the Hajj is transforming the pilgrim's experience from one that is spiritual to a more touristic one. The framework of the chapter is summarised in Figure 5.1.

Figure: 5.1. Structure of the chapter

5.1 Overview of Methodology (Stages 1 and 2)

Stage 1: comprises a focus group undertaken with British pilgrims who have performed the Hajj within the last three years (See Appendix Stage One). Focus groups, in general, facilitate open-ended discussions on a specific topic (Carey & Asbury, 2016), in this case, the commodification of the Hajj – as well as potentially identifying new areas of discussion relevant to the research.

Stage 2: comprises semi-structured in-depth interviews undertaken face-to-face pilgrims whilst participating in the live event of Hajj in 2016 (see Appendix Stage Two). These are supplemented by participant observation. The purpose of the research at Stage 2 is to explore in greater detail the individual pilgrim's personal experiences of Hajj and to reveal their understanding of these experiences.

There is no single, ideal paradigm for research in the behavioural sciences; all have limitations, but the use of a multi-method approach may help to overcome potential weaknesses in the study (Bernard, 2000). In this thesis, the use of a focus group, semi-structured interviews and participant observation increases the rigour of the research, enhancing its accuracy and diligence (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton, 2000).

The qualitative paradigm adopted in this thesis embraces the philosophies of phenomenological and interpretive inquiry to uncover the personal, subjective feelings of participants. Phenomenological and interpretivist approaches, according to Wearing et al. (2001), involve exploration of the heads and hearts of the participants. In this case, these approaches are undertaken in order to investigate pilgrims' individual experiences of ritual and place, their understanding of experiences, and the effects of commodification on their spiritual experience outcomes.

5.2 Justification of the methods

The academic study of tourism is a comparatively recent area of research and has generally been grounded on work conducted in the more recognised disciplines within the social sciences (Husserl, 1913). Early academic observations focused on examining the historical origins and social development of tourism whilst, in later studies, the focus shifted onto the functional aspects of tourism, relying primarily on the positivistic, quantitative strategies of 'structured surveys and quantification' (Riley, 2010: 22) in order to measure the scope, direction and impact of tourism. However, reflecting the increasing adoption and influence of sociological, behavioural and anthropological approaches in researching human behaviour in general, the study of

tourism, in particular, has more recently witnessed to greater use of interpretive, qualitative methods (Veal, 1992).

Academics recognise that the scientific approach endorsed by positivistic philosophies does not adequately address the social dimension of tourism, specifically the nature and impact of human emotions and feelings that are an integral part of the tourism equation (Fishwick & Vining, 1992; Hayllar & Griffin, 2005). Positivistic, scientific investigation tends to place self and other as distinct opposites, resulting in the disembodiment of the researcher from the object of study, and is non-reflective of the individual tourist's experiences, perceptions and motivations (Hayllar & Griffin, 2005). Consequently, it has been argued that this subject/object perspective in tourism research has 'led to the objectification of cultures, societies, geographies and people' (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004: 39) and has been unsuccessful in developing an understanding of tourist motivations, behaviours, needs and experiences. Recognising the limitations and potential failure of objective scientific-based methods, this study, therefore, adopts a qualitative phenomenological and interpretive approach in order to gain a clearer sociological understanding of the pilgrim's perceptions, experiences and responses. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research design and methodology employed in this research, including a justification of the suitability of qualitative techniques using the philosophies of phenomenology and interpretivism for this study.

5.2.1 Triangulation

Decrop (1999: 158) defines triangulation as 'looking at the same phenomenon, or research question, from more than one source of data' in order to cross-validate and / or add an additional dimension to the data. Essentially, there are four types of triangulation: data triangulation, method triangulation, investigator triangulation, and theoretical triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

In this thesis, the data triangulation method was found to be the most suitable approach. It was employed in the second stage of this research and took the form of semi-structured interviews combined with participant observation. The data from both were subsequently analysed using methods of interpretations through interview transcripts and analysing the actions and activities of pilgrims through photos, videos and observations. This whole process facilitated the identification of emerging themes and sub-themes from the data (Alam, 2005; Kwortnik, 2003).

Another reason for selecting the data triangulation method for this thesis was this method contains three elements, people, place and time, and it has been employed by many other researchers (Alam, 2005; Begley 1996; Ellis at al., 2008; Thurmond, 2001). Data triangulation in thisn research based on these three elements is as follows:

- **People**

Data was gathered from diverse types of pilgrims who participated in the Hajj of 2016. Respondents for this research were pilgrims from different walks of life from developed and developing world. Pilgrims interviewed consisted of people who were different in terms of age, nationalities, income status, social status and Hajj package status.

- **Place**

The majority of Interviews were conducted in Mecca and some in Madinah, though on different localities and places. For example, interviews were held in the Grand Mosque premises, field of Arafat, Muzdalifah, Mina, libraries and hotels of respondents. In UK, some interviews were conducted in the Islamic community centres. Some interviews were conducted while interviewees were performing Umrah and other non-mandatory prayers in Mecca.

- **Time**

Interviews in Mecca took place in the time of Hajj from 20th of August 2016 to 20th September 2016. Pilgrims were interviewed and observed during a longer span of time. Thus the length of the data collection period was considered to have a significant impact on this research.

By logical extension, it can be argued that by employing the data triangulation method in this thesis, the validity and precision of qualitative exploratory research was enhanced by restricting the influence of subjective and methodological preconceptions (Keegan, 2009; Yin, 1994).

5.3 Reasons for using qualitative methods

Generally, qualitative research is relevant to the exploratory nature of this type of research, and is often used where little is known about a subject or a phenomenon (Jordan & Gibson, 2004) and in cases where the research inquiry may involve subconscious beliefs or behaviours not educed through quantitative methods. Qualitative research in social inquiry allows the researcher 'to collect data on behaviours, activities and events and seek an understanding of action, problems and processes in their social context' (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004:3). The use of

qualitative research, whilst often faulted for its lack of scientific measure and objectivity, achieves a degree of intensity and scope of human inquiry and understanding not achievable within the limits of quantifiable positivistic research or methods (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton, 2000). A researcher using qualitative investigation veers from the pragmatic ordering of human thought and behaviour, seeking to expose how individuals think and feel and to gain insights into how they make sense of their world (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2004).

The most effective qualitative research, according to Ezzy (2002: xii), requires the researcher to enter into the participant's world, 'establishing a relationship with people, places and performances' in order to understand the socio-cultural processes of how people attach meaning in their lives. Qualitative research methods also allow a degree of flexibility and freedom in the data analysis, 'rather than a slavish adherence to methodological rules' (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 5). This study, then focuses on using methods of inquiry that generate rich descriptive data, methods that tap into the spring of pilgrim experiences, emotions and subjective thoughts and allow for exploration beyond the limits of scientific approaches. Owing to the exploratory nature of qualitative inquiry and in order to meet the aims of this thesis, an interpretivist and phenomenological stance is adopted.

5.3.1 The philosophy of interpretivism

Crotty (1998: 3) defines a theoretical perspective as the 'philosophical stance' that informs the research methodology. A similar concept is that of a paradigm, defined as a 'basic set of beliefs that guide action' that encompasses the epistemological, ontological and methodological ideas that research is designed around (Guba, 1990: 17; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). There are a number of major philosophical perspectives or paradigms that may be used to inform social research, including the interpretivist and phenomenological perspectives that have informed the design of this research. The following sections, therefore, discuss the rationale for adopting an interpretivist and phenomenological perspective, highlighting its key characteristics and underlying assumptions and by looking at opposing views where appropriate.

One way to understand interpretivism is to contrast it with its antithesis - positivism. Positivism is often seen as inextricably linked to objective knowledge; if there is one real world (objectivism), positivists would be concerned with knowing the objective categories within that world. This approach can be seen to have an affinity with the natural sciences and typically reflects realist ontology (Flick, 2006: 78). Bryman (2008:15) recognises that the chief 'clash' between positivism and interpretivism lies in

the idea of a …'division between an emphasis on the explanation of human behaviour that is the chief ingredient of the positivist approach to the social sciences and the understanding of human behaviour'. Positivists, typically employing quantitative methods, claim that interpretivist research is excessively flexible (lacking structure) and soft science; in contrast, positivist research is considered to be fixed (structured) and more scientific. Indeed, positivists sometimes refer to the interpretivist researcher as a 'second-class citizen', considering the latter's work to be characterised by a sense of doubt (Denzin et al., 1994). In a similar vein, interpretivists accuse the positivist researcher of seeking a 'quick fix' as they are not interacting with people in the field and, being unfamiliar with the social world and its differences, they manipulate data and statistics according to their needs (Filmer et al., 1972).

According to Webb et al. (1996), sociologists and others working within the social sciences contend that the structured, objective approach to and reasoning within research in the natural sciences is unsuitable as the subject matter of the social sciences, namely societies and people, are dynamic and aware; people understand and make sense of their social world and constantly make decisions about how to act and react within that world. In contrast, natural phenomena are predictable; they lack this capability. Hence, interpretivists reject the positivist notion that society is the artefact of social rules that social behaviour is predictable and, therefore, that scientific methods and measures can be employed to explain and predict social behaviour. Rather, they argue that the emphasis of sociological investigation should be on identifying and interpreting the meanings that human beings attach to the social institutions, relations and phenomena that comprise and define society. In a similar vein, interpretivists argue in support of research approaches that seek to reveal the senses that lie behind social action and, hence, predominantly promote the use of qualitative interpretivist approaches that focus on understanding individuals in their day-to-day social setting (Webb et al., 1996).

Given the focus of this research, the notion of being able to scientifically generate 'explanations' would be at odds with the interpretive, value-laden nature of commodification and spiritual experiences. To be more specific, as the concepts of both commodification and spiritual experiences are value-laden social phenomena with multiple meanings and definitions, it was deemed inappropriate to adopt an approach to the research that would require any reference to 'commodification and spiritual experience' be understood in the same way by all participants in the study. For example, if, as is typical within a positivist approach, a survey was to be utilised, then how could it be ensured that each respondent's views were captured in relation to the

same thing? Furthermore, the first requirement of a quantitative method, such as a survey, would be an operational definition '[as] your research will be stuck with how you define the phenomenon at the outset (Silverman 2006: 42). This demonstrates that a positivist theoretical perspective and quantitative methodology would not fit with the aims of this research. Instead, this research, rather than building on prior assumptions, seeks to move beyond such pre-determined definitions and to place the emphasis on the multiple meanings and values that participants themselves bring to the context. Specifically, pilgrims on the Hajj not only interact with their socio-cultural environment but also seek to make sense of it through their own interpretation of the experience and the meaning that they draw from it. In turn, their own actions may be seen as being meaningful in the context of these socially constructed interpretations and meanings. It is, therefore, the role of the interpretivist researcher to seek to comprehend the subjective reality of those that they study in order to be able to make sense of and comprehend their motives, actions and intentions in a way specifically meaningful to the participants in the research – in this case, pilgrims or religious tourists participating in the Hajj.

Significantly, interpretivism draws on two different intellectual traditions, namely, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. Phenomenology refers to the way in which individuals make sense of the world around them, whereas the concept of symbolic interactionism proposes that members of a society engage in a continual process of interpreting the social world around them by interpreting the actions of others with whom they interact, this interpretation leading them to adjust their own understandings and actions. Either way, however, crucial to the interpretivist philosophy is the requirement that the researcher adopts an empathetic stance; particularly, the challenge facing the researcher is to enter the social world of their research subjects and to understand their world from their perspective (Saunders et al., 2009: 116).

Overall, therefore, this research does not wish to impose any pre-determined frameworks or typologies of commodification and spiritual experiences and, as such, a qualitative methodology and interpretivist and phenomenological philosophical stance have been deemed most appropriate in order to meet the aims and objectives of the research.

5.3.2 The philosophy of phenomenology

The purpose of phenomenological research is to highlight the particular; that is, to interpret phenomena according to how they are understood by individual respondents

in a particular context. As such, this is generally translated into collecting 'deep' data and insights through inductive, qualitative methods, such as semi-structured in-depth-interviews, debates, arguments or participant observation, and reporting it from the viewpoint of the research participants. Phenomenology is associated with the study of experience from the perception of the individual, challenging taken-for-granted suppositions and customary ways of perceiving (Badhra, 1990; Benton & Craib, 2001; Bernard, 2000). Epistemologically, phenomenological philosophy is grounded in a paradigm of individual knowledge and subjectivity and stresses the importance of individual perspectives and interpretation. As such, phenomenological research is considered appropriate for comprehending subjective experiences, gaining insights into people's values, motivations and actions, and cutting through the muddle of taken-for-granted suppositions and conventional wisdom (Benton & Craib, 2001; Faulkner, 2000; Lester, 1999; Sokolowski, 2000).

Potentially, therefore, phenomenological investigation shares similarities with other fundamentally qualitative approaches, including ethnography, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism. However, there are distinctions. For example, ethnography is the study of culture, whereas phenomenology is the study of 'lifeworld' human experience; moreover, ethnography is concerned with discovering the association between culture and behaviour, whereas phenomenology focuses on exploring the personal construction of the individual's world. Also, ethnography is typically based on the study of sites with, in principle, no limit on the number of participants whilst, in contrast, phenomenology investigates the mind of the individual and, hence, usually involves a limited number of participants (Mackenzie, 1994; Paul, 2004).

According to Husserl, who is widely considered to be the father of phenomenology, 'pure' phenomenological investigation seeks simply to describe rather than explain and, hence, commences from a position free from hypothesis or bias (see Lester, 1999).To put in another way, phenomenological research should strive to separate an individual's experience from the context and symbolic meanings of that experience; to reveal its true essence (Hayllar & Griffin, 2005). As such, the phenomenological researcher becomes, in effect, an observer. However, others have challenged the requirement to commence without preconceptions or bias or, in short, for the researcher to suspend (temporarily) their own understanding of phenomena and focus entirely on the participant's experience (Moran, 2009; Plummer, 1983; Stanley et al., 1993). Inevitably, explanations and implications will be drawn from the research outcomes, firmly locating the researcher in the 'frame' of the study as a purposeful and subjective performer rather than as a separated and unbiased observer. Indeed, there

have been more recent calls for phenomenological researchers to actively embed themselves within rather than distance themselves from the phenomenon under investigation, albeit recognising the potential bias they may inject (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Phenomenological and related approaches can be applied to single cases or purposely selected samples. While single-case studies are able to detect issues which demonstrate discrepancies and system failures – and to brighten or draw attention to 'unlike' situations – positive inferences are less easy to make without a small sample of participants. In multiple participant study, the strength of inference which can be made increases quickly once factors begin to recur with more than one participant. In this context it is vital to differentiate between statistical and qualitative validity: phenomenological research can be robust in indicating the presence of factors and their effects in individual cases, but must be tentative in suggesting their extent in relation to the population from which the participants or cases were drawn (Lester, 1999 & Measor, 1985).

Despite its potential to contribute a deeper understanding of how people make sense of or understand their world, however, a number of constraints or challenges are associated with phenomenological research. First and foremost, its success or viability is largely dependent on the ability of participants to articulate clearly and truthfully the nature of their experiences; they may find it difficult to express thoughts and opinions about often complex or challenging phenomena, or may feel restricted in doing so by cultural and other barriers. Secondly; logistical and generalisation issues are connected with this. The verbal and terms employed in both existential-phenomenological philosophy and phenomenological inquiry are commonly simpleminded or challenging.

Both approaches are challenging but contributed in this thesis. With regards to existential phenomenology in particular, it can be explained in different ways. For instance, Augustin Berque (1998: 442) argues that 'existential phenomenology compares the subjective and the objective in human milieu', whereas Entrikin (1976: 623) defines it 'as a combination of the phenomenological method with the importance of understanding man in his existential world'. Thus, existential phenomenological questions could include:

i.   How do you experience your spiritualty? Can you feel it or can you see it or can you talk with it? What makes you spiritual?
ii. How are you subjectively experiencing time/place/space?
iii. Do you want time to be halted here so you can feel more divine spirituality?

iv.   Do you want to stay in this world which is not your actual world?

Conversely, Finlay (2008: 29) argues that 'phenomenological attitude questions aims to focus attitude of receptivity, draining of the self in order to be filled by the other. The aim is to see through fresh eyes, to understand through embracing new modes of being' (Finlay, 2008: 29).

Although existential-phenomenological values and phenomenological are challenging to implement, both aims to do justice to respondents' daily experience, evoking what it is to be human (Finlay, 2011). Therefore, both existential-phenomenological values and phenomenology are vital form of inquiry in this thesis as both aim to be dynamic to opportunity, seeking to discover the unidentified (spiritual or touristic experience?).

In phenomenological research in general, assumptions are determined by the specific participants selected for the study. Moreover, given its location within a specific time frame or moment, the technique might overlook data about broader periods or about the development of an experience. In other words, whilst concentrating on a rich narrative of an experience, data with regards to what led up to that experience, what its results or consequences might be, and what the concomitants and additional issues related with the experience are might not be forthcoming (Moustakas, 1994). Thirdly, a major concern in phenomenological study is that of bias (Creswell, 2014; Janesick, 2011; Patton, 2002); the investigator's role may inevitably involve the injection of bias, opinions and values from the outset of the study (Janesick, 2011). Another constraint is that the process can be time consuming and physical intensive (Creswell, 2014; Janesick, 2011). At the same time, the sheer quantity of data that has to be analysed could be a disadvantage.

Additionally, the individual circumstances in which the data are collected from cannot be generalised (external validity); in such cases, the purpose of the research will not be to generate a theory that is generalisable to all populations. The task of the research will be simply trying to explain what is going on in particular research setting (Maxwell, 2013:31). And finally, there are constraints related to credibility and reliability; as Rudestam and Newton (2015) suggest, it is the investigator's responsibility to convince the audience that the findings are based on critical investigation. Patton (2002) argues there are no straightforward checks that can be applied for reliability and validity. Therefore, the investigator should strive to present the data and communicate what they reveal within the stated aims of the study (Patton, 2002: 433).

Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, phenomenological research facilitates the generation of a rich and comprehensive narrative of human experiences; results are permitted to appear rather than being forced by the investigator, whilst the faithful recording of the respondents' explanations and expressed experiences may provide raw data free from researcher bias (Lester, 1999). At the same time, the phenomenological approach benefits from the motivation and individual interest of the investigator. As Maxwell (2013: 24) asserts, this is an advantage when the investigator has a strong interest in the subject, supporting the completion of the research. Another asset is how data is collected. Through subjective, direct responses, the investigator is able to gain first-hand knowledge about what participants experience through broad and open-ended enquiry (Patton, 2002; Maxwell, 2013; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Reconsiderations can be made along the way as fresh experiences arise, enabling the investigator to develop new themes for investigation as the research progresses (Miles et al., 1994: 9); 'the human aspect is the utmost asset and the central dimness of phenomenological inquiry and analysis—a scientific two-edged sword' (Patton, 2002: 433).

Generally, then, phenomenological research explores human experiences through the explanations provided by those involved; its aim is to define the meaning that such experiences hold for each subject, and it is often used in the context of phenomena of which there is limited knowledge and understanding (Donalek, 2004). In phenomenological studies, participants are requested to describe their experiences as they observe them, typically through interviews. And in order to understand the stated lived experiences of respondents, the researcher must bracket out their own ideas and values; only when the researcher's own ideas about the phenomenon are put aside is it possible to see the experience from the eyes of the person who has lived it. Conducting phenomenological qualitative research can, therefore, be 'a challenging, exciting, and at times, exhaustive process' (Donalek, 2004:517), yet the ultimate outcome might be very satisfying for the researcher.

This, it can be argued that phenomenology is the most appropriate philosophy within which to locate the qualitative approach in this thesis. The research is looking for something new in the context of Hajj pilgrim's experiences; it seeks to identify how pilgrims, from their own individual perspective, experience the contemporary Hajj. Hence, it can be argued that phenomenological research supports the goals of this thesis to produce a comprehensive and coherent explanation of a particular human experience (that of the pilgrim) in an experiential moment (the Hajj).

5.4 Exploratory research strategy

According to Burns and Bush (2014:101-102), exploratory research can be thought of as the collection data in an informal and unstructured way. An exploratory research strategy is appropriate when the investigator knows little about the subject; it is designed to investigate an issue, problem or opportunity in order to provide insights and evidence about a selected field of inquiry which, typically, has not benefitted from prior research (Sreejesh et al., 2013). In addition, exploratory research is not restricted to one particular paradigm but may use either qualitative or quantitative methods. One of its main advantages is that it is flexible and adaptable to change; the researcher must be and able to change directions as result of a new data and new insights that appear (Naipaul, 1989: 222). Nevertheless, as Adam and Schvaneveldt (1991) argue, the inherent elasticity of exploratory research does not mean absence of directions; ''what it does means is that the focus is initially broad and become progressively narrower as the research progress' (Adam & Schvaneveldt,1991, cited in Saunders et al., 2003: 97). Conversely, exploratory studies are criticised for generating data that may be subject to bias, and for often making use of a modest number of samples that may not sufficiently represent the target population (Stebbins, 2001: 47).

The research in this thesis, exploring the consequences of commodification on the spiritual experience of pilgrims participating in the Hajj, can therefore be considered to be exploratory. Predominantly, it seeks to uncover 'what is happening' and to seek new insights, assessing respondents' experiences in a new light (Robson, 2002: 59).

5.5 Sampling: An overview

Qualitative phenomenological and interpretive study is generally not concerned with establishing large random samples because, in contrast to positivist quantitative research, there is no intent to generalise the findings (Veal, 1992). Phenomenological study is characterised by a concentration on the meaning that research subjects attach to a social phenomenon; an effort by the investigator to comprehend 'what is happening and why it is happening' (Saunders et al., 2003: 72). Such research would be predominantly concerned with the context in which such events were taking place. Therefore, the study of a small sample of subjects might be more suitable than a large number as with a positivist approach. Thus, in this tradition, researchers are more likely to work with qualitative data and use a diverse of methods to collect data in order to establish numerous perspectives of the phenomena, (Easter-Smith et al., 1991).

Therefore, to meet the aims of this study, participant selection was guided by two requirements. First, the Stage One research (Focus Group) required that all

participants had previous direct experience of undertaking the Hajj to Mecca; and second, Stage Two Research (Semi-Structured Interviews) required that all respondents were actually participating in the Hajj. Gender was not an issue in the selection of participants in either the focus group or the semi-structured interviews; in the latter, there was roughly an equal split between males and females. At Stage One, the age of participants ranged from thirty to seventy-five and, at Stage Two, from eighteen to ninety years of age.

The six participants in the focus group (see 5.5.1 below) were from the UK and all had undertaken the Hajj within the last three years. Thus, they had all experienced the Hajj, albeit to varying extents; some had only recent experience whereas others had participated in it on a number of occasions over the years. As discussed in more detail shortly, the use of focus groups facilitates open-ended discussions on a specific topic, in this case, the commodification of the Hajj and consequences for the pilgrim's experiences, as well as potentially identifying new areas for discussion relevant to the research.

As such, the focus group provided essential foundational data which were built upon and explored in more detail at Stage Two. Nevertheless, although the issues that emerged from the focus group discussions revealed a consensus amongst participants that most of the pilgrims became the victim of commodification, such as the commodified consumption of place, shopping opportunities, the 'packaging' of the, luxury tourism and hospitality amenities, Smart Media Technologies (SMT), less was revealed with regards to the extent to which the spiritual experience of the Hajj has been diminished as a result of the intense commodification of ritual and place; impacting the authentic spiritual experience of pilgrim. In short, the focus group was unable to explore the depth of spiritual experience and engagement with the spiritual environment that this research seeks to address.

It was for this reason that, at Stage Two, the researcher became a participant in the Hajj in 2016 with the intent of exploring in depth at the spiritual experience of the Hajj through the eyes of pilgrims. Specifically, narrowing the participant field to a particular subsection of pilgrims on the Hajj permitted the researcher to focus on and investigate in depth their experiences and behaviours.

A total of fifty-eight semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with pilgrims participating in the 2016 Hajj. Male respondents slightly outnumbered female respondents reflecting the fact that it is more difficult to approach Muslim women owing

to religious sensitivity and social constraints. However, as this research was not concerned with gender, this did not affect the research aims and objectives. Generally, sampling, or respondent selection, may stop at the point where the researcher determines that saturation has been reached (Ezzy, 2002), the point at which, according to Pitney and Parker (2009: 44) 'you start hearing similar information from multiple participants'. To put in another way, saturation has been reached when redundancy of data is in evidence, when there is no new information or the information is very similar (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). At Stage Two, recruitment of additional respondents stopped once it became evident that the study's purpose had been reached and there were sufficient data to answer the research objectives.

5.5.1 Locating the research participants: Focus group (Stage One)

Purposive sampling was adopted as the most appropriate method for recruiting participants for the focus group. This is considered by Welman and Kruger (1999) to be the most common form of non-probability sampling, reflecting the Hycner's (1999: 156) observation that 'the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa), comprising even the type of participants'. Non-probability or purposive sampling permits the investigator to employ their own judgement in selecting participants who are best suited to respond to the study question and to meet the research goals and objectives (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton, 2000). Using subjective judgement, therefore, participants should be identified and selected on the basis of their experience or impending experience connected to the phenomenon being investigated.

At Stage One, a total of six respondents were selected to participate in the focus group. Of these, three were identified and recruited through the social networks of mosques and Islamic centres in Birmingham, two were recruited with the assistance of Hajj tour agents in London and Birmingham and through personal contacts, and the sixth was selected from researcher's neighbourhood in Birmingham through personal contacts who helped to identify suitable candidates for the study. It is acknowledged that there are limitations associated with the use of a culturally specific focus group in this thesis. However, at this stage the respondents' responses would be framed by their participation and understanding of the Hajj whilst, more specifically, the research at this stage was exploratory in the sense it sought to confirm that commodification of the Hajj is occurring, not to explore the outcomes of that commodification. Hence, the cultural specificity of the focus group is not considered problematic.

5.5.2 The Rationale for using a focus group

'Methods are the nuts and bolts of research …the point where the participants and the researcher meet… it is through methods that methodology and epistemology become visible' (Carter & Little, 2007: 1325). Within qualitative research in particular, a number of different methods are available to the researcher. The purpose of this section is to offer a rationale for the use of a focus group at Stage One of this research.

The choice of a focus group as an appropriate method was directed by both the research topic and by the overall phenomenological and interpretivist approach adopted for the research. Broadly speaking, focus group interviews have been criticised in the qualitative literature for producing 'manufactured' rather than 'natural' data, the latter being of specific value to qualitative researchers (Silverman 2007; Edley & Litosseliti, 2010). Nevertheless, within the context of phenomenological and interpretivist research, focus groups, which may be considered to be interactional events, represent an effective source of valid qualitative data (Edley & Litosseliti, 2010). Moreover, although observation is often considered to be a more suitable source of 'natural data' in the social world, given the specific focus of this thesis on how individuals comprehend spiritual experiences, appropriate data sources were simply not available as 'one could record thousands of hours of casual conversation without encountering even a snippet…' on the topic of interest (Edley & Litosseliti 2010: 164).

One of the main benefits of focus groups is that, in contrast to other interview techniques, they require 'relatively little direct input from the researcher' and yet allow the pursuit of data beyond the 'received wisdom of the field' (Morgan, 1997: 21). At the same time, focus groups also permit the scope and nature of the conversation to be developed by the participants themselves (albeit directed towards the research aims by the facilitator / researcher), thus nurturing an emic, or insider, perspective on the subject being discussed. Weeden (2005) concurs, arguing that an advantage of focus groups, particularly in comparison to individual interviews, is that they place control of the conversation in the hands of the participants as opposed to the interviewer; potentially snowball the elicitation of insightful information. Moreover, as the participants themselves are encouraged to direct the conversation, the inductive quality of the research is enhanced.

In addition, the strength of focus groups compared with individual interviews is the access they offer to 'group meanings, processes and norms' and their ability to construct socially meaningful data (Bloor et al., 2001: 4). In short, focus groups 'can yield data on the uncertainties, ambiguities, and group processes that lead to and underlie group assessments… focus groups can throw light on the normative

understandings that groups draw upon to reach their collective judgements' (Bloor et al., 2001: 4). In this study, such collective judgements can be thought of as frames of reference for exploring in further detail at Stage Two the ways in which commodification the Hajj is understood and how this impacts on the experience of individual pilgrims participating in the Hajj.

Further support for focus groups is offered by Weeden (2005: 179) who suggests that they allow participants to 'explore the underlying (possibly unconscious) influences on their behaviours… [whilst] the interaction can potentially reveal intensely personal views and values' whilst Jennings (2005) similarly notes that focus group research is a valuable method when seeking to identify and understand the various values that underpin opinion on a particular issue or topic. Putting it another way:

> The nature of the talk generated in focus groups is a mixture of personal beliefs and available collective narratives that are further flavoured by the local circumstances of participants' lives. [The data] can also reveal social and cultural contexts for individual beliefs… It enables focus groups to furnish socially grounded insights into aspects of personal and social life. (Warr, 2005: 200).

Therefore, the main advantage of the focus group method in this study is that it can serve to reveal individual senses and values, whilst maintaining the broader social background that these values are unavoidably formed by and in turn help to shape. In short, the focus group method offers the opportunity for the significance of the Hajj and the related spiritual experience to be discussed according to both individual perspectives and collective representations of it.

5.5.3 Disadvantages of focus groups

Inevitably, a number of limitations are associated with focus group research. First, an authoritative role on the part of the moderator may significantly influence the direction and content of focus group discussions; specifically, the moderator might, deliberately or unintentionally, insert bias into the participants' exchange of ideas and thoughts, resulting in erroneous outcomes. Moderators can also lead focus group members into making positive assumptions or suppositions because, not wishing to contradict the views of the moderator, or even out of fear of substandard moderator, members might not reveal their a true and authentic feelings (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton, 2000). Second, a focus group might be dominated by one or more members who impose their views on the group as a whole or who prevent others from expressing their views. And third, the group context might constrain some members who are unwilling or lack the

confidence to reveal their opinions. Despite these problems, though, focus groups remain a popular means of investigation and an important for generating valuable data (Kitzinger, 1994; Kruger & Casey, 2009).

In the spring of 2016, one focus group was held in Birmingham, UK. The group consisted of mixed ages (minimum age 30), with all participants having undertaken the Hajj as a pilgrim at least once. All participants were Muslims and British nationals from different ethnic backgrounds; two were Hajj Tour agents (one holding a Saudi Hajj Tour Agent License, the other was working as a sub-agent), two were retired civil servants, one was a bus driver and one was a general practitioner (doctor) in Birmingham.

The discussions, directed by the facilitator, addressed key themes relevant to the understanding of the participants' physical experiences and emotive outcomes of the Hajj. The participants were also prompted to relate their perceptions of the tangible and conceptual qualities they associated with the Hajj. The discussions were, with participants' consent, digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. The general outcomes and dominant themes identified core issues relevant to this stage of the study and defined the format and context of the following second stage of the research, which involved semi-structured in-depth interviews undertaken with pilgrims participating in the 2016 Hajj.

5.5.4 Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews (Stage Two)

The second stage of data collection took place during the researcher's participation in the Hajj. Namely, he joined the Hajj as a pilgrim/researcher in August-September 2016. It should be noted that he had undertaken the Hajj on twice previously; hence the principal purpose on this occasion was to undertake the empirical research for this thesis.

Initially, the researcher intended to interview both domestic and international pilgrims. However, during stage two, not only it was found that domestic Saudi pilgrims were unwilling to discuss the Hajj, but also certain barriers existed:
  i.   A language barrier;
  ii.   Domestic pilgrims did not wish to speak about the Hajj owing to religious sensitivities;
  iii. For political reasons, talking about the Hajj could be potentially dangerous;
  iv.   They did not wish to talk about Saudi government's role in the commodification of Hajj

Nevertheless, some Saudi domestic pilgrims did agree to be interviewed but withdrew as soon as serious / contentious issues arose. For example, a Professor from Madinah University was approached for interview but the moment the discussion turned to serious issues the respondent became silent and made a sign with his hand to say 'it is better to zip the lips'.

It should also be noted that the domestic market accounts for just 30% of the Hajj, the remaining 70% of pilgrims comprising non-Saudis (Statista, 2017). Hence, the exclusion of the domestic pilgrims, though potentially losing a potentially interesting perspective, would have limited impacts on the overall outcomes of the research.

At this stage, the principal data collection method was semi-structured in-depth interviews; as Saunders (2003) argues, semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with flexibility in the interview process, allowing the sequence of questions to be varied and emergent issues to be followed and discussed. The use of semi-structured interviews is particularly appropriate in context such as this study, where the researcher has a list of questions and themes to be covered; semi-structured interviews permit these questions and themes to be varied from interview to interview or from participant to participant. That is, the researcher has an option to change, ignore or alter the sequence of the questions during interviews to reflect the background and role of particular participants. Conversely, extra questions might be required to pursue themes that emerged in the interview (Saunders, 2003: 246-247). In essence, semi-structured interviews are used in qualitative research not to only identify and understand the 'what' and the 'how' but also out emphasis on answering the question 'why'.

In the case of this study, semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate method given both the flexibility they provided in the context of recruiting and interviewing participants in the Hajj and, more generally, for proving 'new insight' (Robson, 2002: 59) within what is essentially an exploratory study. They were employed in order to explore critically the extent to which the contemporary commodification of the holy destination and ritual of the Hajj is transforming the pilgrim's experience from one mainly spiritual to one more touristic, considering not only if and to what extent but, importantly, why.

The interviews were all undertaken on a one-to-one, face-to-face basis. In order to effectively elicit respondents' phenomenological understanding of their experiences of the Hajj (and to access a broad spectrum of pilgrims) it was necessary for interviews to

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be undertaken during the Hajj itself. This, in turn, necessitated travel to different places in Saudi Arabia (Mecca, Madinah and Jeddah) and to different religious areas of Hajj (Mecca, the Fields of Arafat, Muzdelifa, Mina, Miqat, and Bridges of Devils, Slaughterhouse) to interview a number of participants. This presented sometimes a number of challenges, not least the high temperatures which, on occasion, reached 47C to 49C.

The semi-structured interviews facilitated the construction an image of each respondent and their background and the development of a deeper understanding of their thought processes. Five pilot interviews were initially undertaken in order to identify any potential difficulties with the flow or interpretation of questions and themes although, with the semi-structured approach, each conversation is unique and, hence, it is difficult to pre-assess or preordain the flow and exact content of the conversation. Equally, some participants were members of the researcher's Hajj group and so there already existed was some degree of familiarity and awareness of the themes. In these cases, it was possible for the interview to more quickly onto core themes relevant to the research and for the conversation to be more subtlety directed.

More generally, interviews commenced with broad questions exploring the significance of the Hajj to the respondents and whether they had previously undertaken it. If so, the opportunity existed to explore comparisons between the current and past experiences of the event and any changes that had occurred. The conversation was then typically directed towards the respondents' current experiences of Hajj, broadly seeking to identify and explore their understanding and behaviours in relation to the commodification of the Hajj. As the conversation developed, respondents were also encouraged to reveal more about the emotional and spiritual feelings associated with Mecca and Hajj. This progression, from general conversation to more specific dialogue, eased the interviewee into the exchange and diminished any feelings of nervousness. Moreover, as already noted, in semi-structured interviews the investigator cannot 'slavishly follow a schedule' (Bryman & Bell, 2002:477), something that became evident as the interviews proceeded; it was necessary to maintain a structure but with adequate elasticity (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003) to develop a relationship with respondents as a basis for them discussing and revealing their 'true' feelings and experiences (Weinberg, 2002).

During the Hajj, a total of seventy interviews were conducted; of these, fifty-eight were selected for analysis, the remaining twelve being discarded because of either technical problems with the recorder, too much background noise in the background, or

interviewees having to leave during the interview having been summoned by their group leaders or families.

The selection of participants was undertaken through personal connections, and random and snowballing sampling strategies, as follows:

- Some participants were recruited from the researcher's Hajj group.
- Through the Hajj group members' social connections.
- Following up the researcher's Hajj tour guide and agent social contacts.
- Visiting the University of Madinah and the Umm al-Qura University of Mecca; staff and students at both universities recommend pilgrims they knew.
- Visiting Grand Mosques and their libraries.
- Visiting the tents of pilgrims from different countries (both developed and developing countries) in the field of Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah.
- Through personal contacts working in the Mecca and Madinah in the hospitality and tourism sector.
- Randomly approaching pilgrims on the road, in the Grand Mosques after and before prayers.
- Visiting Mecca and Madinah museums.
- Visiting hotels, from guest house to five-star establishment.
- Attending religious lectures.

Among fifty-eight respondents, two were hoteliers from Mecca and Madinah, one was working for Saudi Railway and one was working in Saudi Telecom sector. A further three were the Hajj tour operators from both developing and developed countries and performing Hajj as pilgrims. The remaining fifty-one respondents were pilgrims of different ethnicity, gender; age and nationality (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Interview respondents: details

Respondent (R)	Gender Male/ Female	Approx. Age	Nationality	Occupation	Previous Number of Hajj Performed
R 1	M	68	British	Professor	2
R 2	M	40	Pakistani	Hotelier	0
R 3	M	30	Pakistani	Hotelier	1
R 4	M	45	British	Hajj Tour Operator	7
R 5	M	45	Pakistani	Rail Despatcher	0
R 6	M	54	Indian	Engineer	1
R 7	M	48	Indian	Telecom Sector	0
R 8	M	58	Pakistani	Architecture	0
R 9	M	35	Bengali	Businessman	0
R 10	M	40	Bengali	Student	0
R 11	M	55	Indonesian	Architecture	1
R 12	M	57	UAE	----------	0
R 13	M	45	Indian	Businessman	1
R 14	M	46	Pakistani	Retired	0
R 15	M	35	Pakistani	Hotelier	0
R 16	M	50	Pakistani	Local Worker	0
R 17	M	60	South African	Retired	0
R 18	M	60	Pakistani	Army	0
R 19	M	57	Indian	----------	0
R 20	M	42	Indian	Not Known	0
R 21	M	38	Australian	Taxi Driver	0
R 22	M	41	Pakistani	Not Known	0
R 23	M	33	Nigerian	Labour	0
R 24	M	30	Mauritius	Not known	0
R 25	M	46	Indian	----------------	0
R 26	M	60	Indian	----------------	0
R 27	M	40	Malaysian	Teacher	0
R 28	Female	35	Canadian	House wife	0
R 29	M	56	Indonesian	Government Employee	1
R 30	M	35	USA	----------------	0
R 31	M	50	Indonesian	Not Known	0
R 32	M	45	Indonesian	Butcher	0
R 33	M	35	Spain	Labour	0
R 34	M	40	Pakistani	Businessman	0
R 35	M	55	Egyptian	Freedom Activist	1
R 36	M	60	Malaysian	Businessman	0
R 37	M	75	British	Retired	1
R 38	M	68	Not known	Cleaner of Grand Mosque	3
R 39	M	27	British	Doctor	0
R 40	M	51	Pakistani	Cleric	1
R 41	M	54	Canadian	Labour	0
R 42	M	65	Australian	Retired	0
R 43	M	22	British	Student	0
R 44	M	38	British	Taxi Driver	0
R 45	M	29	Philippines	Student	0
R 46	M	56	British	Businessman	1
R 47	M	49	Bengali	Labour	0
R 48	M	39	-----------	Labour	1
R 49	M	45	Ghana	Not Known	1
R 50	M	53	British	Taxi driver	1
R 51	M	54	-----------	--------------	0
R 52	M	35	British	Hajj Tour Agent	5
R 53	M	42	Sweden	PHD Scholar	0
R 54	M	57	British	Not Known	1
R 55	M	56	-----------	--------------	0
R 56	M	89	France	Retired	3
R 57	M	66	-----------	Not Known	0
R 58	M	47	Indian	Seasonal Hajj Tour Operator	2

All fifty-eight interviews were recorded with the consent of respondents with a digital
voice recorder, used as unobtrusively as possible. Most interviews lasted up to fifty
minutes and, as recommended by Taylor and Bogdan (1998). However, the shortest

interview was thirty-five minutes and the longest interview was one hour and twenty minutes. Interviews were transcribed by the investigator as soon after the interview as possible to confirm that the finesses of discussion and gradations of speech were fresh in my notice and facts were not be forgotten (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003). Transcription was a time-consuming process, each interview typically taking eight to twelve hours to transcribe. All interviews were transcribed word for word with no linguistic or syntax alterations. Transcriptions, with any summaries or notes, were then examined in conjunction with the statistics collected throughout additional interviews to detect themes, subjects and classifications.

5.5.5 Disadvantages of semi-structured Interviews

Although semi-structured interviews offer a number of advantages as previously discussed, there are also potential disadvantages or challenges. For example, the interview might lose its focus or flow if the interviewer is unable to pose appropriate questions at the right time during the interview. The interviewer may also make facial expression or provide other signals or cues that direct participants to provide responses anticipated by an interviewer. On a more practical level, semi-structured interviews are very time consuming (both the actual interviews and subsequent transcription) and, dependent on location, expensive to undertake. For instance, this research required the investment of approximately £6000 to participate in the Hajj. In addition, semi-structured interviews are considered by some to lack reliability; interviews cannot be exactly replicated, respondents usually being different (non-standardised) questions, and samples tend to be small. Moreover, the complexity of qualitative data generated may be problematic to analyse (for example, deciding what is and is not relevant), whilst the individual nature of interviews renders the results difficult to generalise. And finally, there may be validity issues as the investigator has no g way of knowing if the participant is sincere or telling the 'truth' (Saunders et al., 2009).

5.5.6 Participant observation

Saunders (2003: 221) argues that if the research objectives are concerned with what people do, one obvious way of discovering this is by watching them do it. Thus, the research can take the form of observation which, essentially, involves systemic observation, recording, description, analysis and interpretation of people's behaviour. There are basically three types of observation: (1) participant observation, (2) structured observation, (3) Non-participant observation. The former adopts a qualitative perspective with the emphasis ion exploring the meaning that people attach to their actions, whilst the latter is, in effect, a quantitative approach is more concerned with the

frequency of those actions. Lastly, non-participant observation is a relatively unobtrusive qualitative research strategy for collecting primary data about some feature of the social world without interacting directly with its participants, (Ostrower, 1998:58-59).

Participant observation is essentially where 'the researcher attempts to participate fully in the lives and activities of the subject and thus become a member of their group. This enables the researcher to share their experience by not merely observing what is happening but also feeling it (Gill & Johnson, 1997:113). It has been extensively used to attempt to get to the root of 'what is going on' and, in this research, was selected as a supplementary method alongside the principal method of semi-structured interview data collection as a means of adding more rigour and depth to understanding commodification and its impact on the spiritual experience of the pilgrims of Mecca. To become a participant, the researcher undertook the Hajj as a pilgrim for a period of thirty days. The observation focused on pilgrims' interaction between social and religious behaviour, religious ideologies, spiritual experience, the destination, contemporary commodities, heritage, technologies and so on. While observing, an attempt was made to blend into the crowd of the Hajj as it is recognised that the role of the observer should remain undisclosed until research objectives are met (Saunders, 2003: 222); otherwise, the actions and activities of pilgrims might be influenced. Although the researcher's Hajj tour agent was aware of his role and activities, the eighty pilgrims in his group were not. Only when the study objectives were met he did disclose his identity as an observer within his Hajj group, which consisted of eighty pilgrims, but not to pilgrims outside his group.

To observe the 'inside story' of different pilgrims of different national, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, the researcher shared accommodation with both poorer and wealthier pilgrims, the former staying simple accommodations and the latter in more expensive hotels as well as in their expensive tents at Arafat and Mina. These tents are built with gypsum material and are guarded by security officers in order to prevent strangers from entering and to ensure protection of guests. The tents' floors are made of tiles while the inside is decorated with flowers and colourful lights. Luxurious sofas are placed at the entrance, whilst the tests also boast luxurious beds and furniture. There is a spacious canteen in the middle to supply various types of food around the clock, and male and female attendants are on duty to serve the guests.

Conversely, the poorer pilgrims with whom the researcher also shared accommodation lived in ordinary tents with no additional services. The researcher tried to remain

inconspicuous during the Hajj, behaving like a real pilgrim which, in essence, he was. Hence, the observation process was continual. Notes were taken directly during the process of Hajj; in addition, more than 300 photographs were taken of scenes and events relevant to the research objectives. In effect, the descriptive observation is based on pilgrims' activities and behaviour during the Hajj in the event, providing the basis of a narrative account, in much the same way as an investigative journalist would (Robson, 2002: 320).

Hence, in this the research, observation, data collection and data analysis were all part of the same research process. Mostly, the researcher carried out data collection and data analysis simultaneously. As a participant observer, he attempted to establish 'what is going on' in terms of 'to critically appraise the extent to which the spiritual experience of Islamic pilgrim is being transformed into a touristic experience as a result of the contemporary commodification of the pilgrimage'. Thus he listened to informal repartee, heard conversations about the Hajj, and mixed socially with pilgrims in situations where behaviours or opinions about the Hajj spiritual might be evident. All observations were, as far as possible, recorded in note form immediately or written up as soon as possible afterwards. These rough notes were subsequently developed into a more systematic structure in order to identify what the investigator journalist might call 'promising lines of enquiry' that researcher might wish to follow up on during his continued observation (Saunders, 2003: 229).

5.6 Research limitations (Credibility)

There are numerous debates surrounding the ways in which the value of social research may be assessed or measured. Veal (2011), for example, suggests that the practice of establishing validity and reliability that stems from positivist enquiry is not always suitable or appropriate in qualitative research. Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer an alternative approach to measuring qualitative investigation, proposing 'trustworthiness' as an indicator of better research. This notion of trustworthiness can be seen as comprising four elements (Bryman, 2008: 34), namely: 'credibility' (similar to internal validity); 'transferability' (equivalent to external validity); 'dependability' (similar to reliability); and 'confirmability' (similar to objectivity). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) support the argument that, for study within the phenomenological and interpretivist paradigm, these are appropriate criteria. In particular, Veal (2011) proposes that data collected in qualitative research has a superior chance of being internally valid (credible) than data collected in by quantitative methods, and that the exchange between the investigator and participants in focus groups or semi-structured interviews conversation enhances credibility as they have to comprehend each other.

It is important that trustworthiness is evident in the analytical process and the broader research design and epistemology. For example, when analysis includes the latent level of the data and the development of codes and themes involves interpretive work, then this approach tends to come from a phenomenologist perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, it is important that in reporting such analyses, this is done in an appropriate way that fits within the epistemological framework of the study. Thus, in order to achieve cohesion and, in turn, credibility, the analysis, interpretation and discussion in this research avoids suggestions of themes 'evolving' or being 'exposed' passively, indicating that themes merely 'exist in' inside the data. Rather, the active role of the investigator is emphasised (Braun & Clarke 2006: 80). Likewise, Gibbs (2002: 6) recommends that when investigators use terms such as 'dig down to' and 'pull the veil back on' to describe research findings, this proposes an implied belief in the fundamental truth. From a phenomenological point of view, this method would be overruled as it suggests that the role of the researcher is to discover the 'facts'. In this research, the supporting epistemology is that of social phenomenology and interpretivism and, as such, it would not make sense to talk of codes or themes that exist in the data, or to suggest that the investigator has simply identified themes and is accepting them as a sole reality. Rather, this research views the data as being created by the participants during the focus group and semi-structured interviews, through their interactions with each other and the investigator.

Consequently, the analysis seeks to understand these constructions and to interpret the meanings that they may represent. As such, codes and themes are created to best fit the data and the opinions of the participants and, in an effort to be transparent about this procedure, each theme offered will be set in the context of the focus group and semi-structured interviews discussions, using extensive verbatim quotations to permit the 'voices of the participants to be heard and to be evident' (Jennings, 2005: 112). Additionally, given the attention paid 'interaction data' in the analysis, the extracts from the raw data will comprise pieces of consecutive or non-consecutive statements by different participants representing numerous or diverse opinions within the conversation (Kidd & Parshall, 2000). This is of particular importance in studies undertaken from the phenomenological and interpretivist perspective, which should make use of data extracts that comprise numerous participants' contributions rather than relying on isolated manifestations (Vicsek, 2007).

Silverman (2000) observes that an important issue within the context of trustworthiness is the need to achieve consistency between what the participants actually say and the arguments they use, and the ways in which the investigator interprets their meaning. This balance depends on subjectivity (participant voices) and reflexivity (the

researcher's interpretation of the meaning). In this research, the interpretation and resulting themes and sub-themes are offered against the background of the participants own words and their interactions with each other and, therefore, achieves such a balance. Consequently, the reader is able to see where the interpretation has come from in terms of the original data. This enhances the transparency of the analysis and affords the reader access to the participants' voices as much as possible within the writing process. It also enhances the level of confirmability of the research as the reader can also interpret the data extracts and assess whether the interpretation reverberates with them.

5.7 Ethics

Related to the above discussion, Rallis and Rossman (2012) suggest that for research to be credible, we must also trust in it. Or to put another way, an unethical study is simply not a trustworthy study (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). Therefore, a number of important ethical considerations need to be taken into account at various stages during the research process.

This study is mostly based on primary research. Therefore, the researcher is responsible for gaining the consent of respondents before collecting data. If the respondent agrees to share information, it is then the duty of the researcher to inform participants regarding the subject, where the data will be used, why the information is required and how this research may impact directly or indirectly on the participants' lives (Kumar, 2005). However, that does not mean the above points are not applicable to the use of secondary data; the author has to respect the different theories and should not adapt or misrepresent them according to research needs.

In this study, the researcher adhered to the University of Central Lancashire's ethical code of conduct for research studies. Following these guidelines, at both the focus groups and semi-structured interviews, participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet and a Consent Form. The information sheet included:

- An introduction to the researcher
- The purpose of the study
- Former results - first stage data (only used in the interview information document)
- Clarification of what was anticipated of the participant
- The subject's right to halt the study at any time
- Data recording, transcription and analysis information

- Privacy and Anonymity
- Researcher's contact details

On a separate form, participants were asked, at their discretion, to provide their identification, country of origin and profession, and a signature of consent. The ethical concerns for this research were not as acute as for some studies where the data may be extremely complex or potentially contentious. Nonetheless, the researcher ensured participants' confidentiality, anonymity and respect for privacy with respect to any data revealed. More specifically, given the potential sensitivity of the data, care was also taken to ensure that all records and computer data which include personal information relating to individuals, such as individuals' name, nationality, professions or photographs/videos, were securely stored. In particular, in storing the data the following data protection process was followed:

i. All data files were encrypted or password protected and only accessible by the researcher.
ii. Two external encrypted hard disks were used to store data.
iii. All equipment which was used to collect data, such as Dictaphone, camera memory card and external hard disks, were secured in locked cabinets.
iv. Data was also stored in a UCLAN -computer with secured password.
v. The names of the participants are not used for the privacy purposes but identified as Respondent 1- Respondent 50 (RI- R50) as a coding.

5.8 Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected from the focus group conducted in the UK and the semi-structured interview process undertaken in Saudi Arabia were analysed separately in this study. The methods of analysis are justified and discussed below.

5.8.1 Focus group: data analysis

As noted earlier, a qualitative exploratory research strategy has been adopted for this study. At Stage One, one focus group was conducted in the UK comprising members who have participated in the Hajj as pilgrims within the last three years. The focus groups provided essential foundational data which was built upon and explored in more detail at Stage Two.

Kitzinger (1995) suggests that a number of aims can be achieved through focus group interaction including the ability to identify participant's understandings and values in relation the topic. Furthermore, the interaction within focus groups can have a 'yes...

but…' quality (Morgan 1997:21) when participants do not necessarily agree with what is said in the group, affording insight into different perspectives on the same broad topic. When presenting the data within the discussion chapters, an effort will be made to refer to interaction by, for example, highlighting if a participant is referring to another participant's contribution by picking up on an earlier point in the discussion. This adds transparency to the nature and flow of the discussion and ensures interactional data is preserved.

Following the recording and subsequent transcription of the focus group discussions the coding process took place. In the initial round, the coding process identifies themes evident in the data, ranging from words to sentences, which are highlighted in different colours. These colours remain same until the fourth stage of the process which involves developing a hierarchy among the categories and codes (Kitzinger 1994-1995; Hyde et al., 2005; Zorn et al., 2006 & Wibeck et al., 2007).

In the second round, sub-codes, also called the researcher analytical lens, (Lune et al., 2012) was used to interpret and perceive what is going on in the data collected. These codes can be the same as in the initial round or mostly the reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far. The third round, the categorisation of codes, shown in black bold words, is where the researcher is arranging codes in order to classify the data, to categorise. When codes are applied and reapplied to qualitative data, the researcher is codifying – it is a procedure that allows data to be segregated, clustered, reformed and reconnected in a way to combine connotation and clarification (Punch, 2005: 201-205). The last and fourth involved the creation of the hierarchy structure among the categories and codes. The hierarchy categories are shown again in black bold words, similar to the third round but in grading order. Here the researcher prioritises categories in order to take out the most and the least important themes which can play a pivotal role in qualitative data analysis of this research. Figure 5.2 below is an example of the entire coding process of data from the focus group.

Figure 5.2: Coding Process of Focus Group

Open Codes from Focus Group Interview Transcripts

Comparison of Hajj cost, lot of reasons behind, difference of currency value, Hajj as business, Hajj tour operators, facilitation become business, extra services, glittery services, sell their products, Saudi behind this, concept of business, Saudi Ministry of Hajj have given it a new shape and converted it in a business, before the air ticket was £200 not it is £900 for Pakistan, commodity when it getting expensive, Hajj Visa services, hotel, Air ticket, Transportation, the business expenditure, earn money from these services, facilities, Saudi industrial missions are involve, Saudi government that they take is as a business now, Hajj is not business from now it was a business existing since centuries, before Islam it was a business of Mecca, Hajj and now 5 million so the demand encouraged needs and wants, Saudi like other countries has also day to day expenditures of their country, companies to invest in Hajj operations and yes they are earning millions and billions from it, In 1970 there was only one road here, now they have 2 to 3 roads and now it is one way traffic, on a sad note on the cost heritage places, modernisation, Hajj in 1970 it was very simple, people respect pilgrims a lot, they say truth now they are lying, everybody want to make money from pilgrims, there were no hotels, these buildings I feel suffocated, 1970, at that time KSA never consider Hajj as a business or Tourism and always accept pilgrims as the 'Guest of Allah', There was no mandatory concept of buying a Hajj package or going in a group, it was simple and easy; though claiming at that time Hajj was not in too much demand, is not correct, enjoyed and remember that Hajj from religiously, spiritually and authenticity perspective, Mecca is full of New York Style buildings, worldly inauthentic commodities, **rather than sharing their Hajj experience with each other, they are discussing their Hotel experience and amenities of tour packages,** KSA shouldn't encourage Hajj as a part of their business strategy, **Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did: simple, without ostentation, no discrimination between poor and rich, sacrifice of the and only staunch worship, person,** recent experience of Hajj, desolately this is not the case now, The rich and poor gap can be observed due to different Hajj packages, pilgrims are not concentrating on worship but they do concentrate on their SMART phone. Pilgrims do not want to tolerate any pain, and the simplicity element is totally invisible, I bought it in £1700, the Hajj tour operator told us different names of the packages like, VVIP, VIP, hotel which is now no more existing near Grand Mosque premises, Mecca is totally changed in fact I couldn't recognise this holy city, there are everywhere 5 stars if you have money you can stay there if not you

can't even dream of it, very comfortable bed there in my room, every day I was getting 2 Towels, 2 shampoos, 2 soaps and the breakfast was so lavish I can't explain you, it was huge buffet, eat cornflakes, vita-bix, you name it you will get it. The evening dinner is 2 times more lavish than breakfast more than 30 dishes, roast chick, curry, Nan bread, roasted mutton, they take extra money no doubt about it but give you as well, too much construction and your worship came under timetable now, I have feeling everybody was running left and right but very few are concentrating towards worship, In 2001 there was no mobile phone pilgrims have time for each other now pilgrims are SMART they are busy with their phones, 2001 you can't take the picture but now every second someone is taking selfie. So there is a lot of change, But I learned one thing from this experience, pilgrim is looking for comforts in Hajj now, they can't resist even a small pain, These buildings are giving wrong Messages, for instance when I went on the roof top of the hotel I felt that Allah house is under your feet, very sad very painful. When we are in our houses we always say do not face your feet towards Mosque and do not make your home higher than Mosque, but what's happening in Mecca, is out of mind. The real actual house of Allah in this condition really put negative impact on your spiritual experience, Hajj is now a business, The which our Prophet (pbuh) has performed , we have to perform Hajj as our Prophet told us, what our religion is telling us, so we have to perform Hajj according to Islamic ideology, No, that business is different from current business. In the past the pilgrims used to bring commodities with them to sell in Mecca or during Hajj, only to cover their expenses, But current business strategy is actually taking money from pilgrims, so there is a great deal of difference between current business and the business of the past, But now you can't find this sprit anywhere in the Hajj, because it is only now business and but business, This is the main reason that Hajj became the product now, Saudi stopped this, because they want pure business. I would say Saudi Arabia should do a Business but out of the premises of Mecca, If Saudi wants to promote tourism they should do outside Mecca premises, no problem, facilitate people there, and earn money from people, there. What's happening currently in Hajj according to me is not reasonable at all, and therefore it is not Hajj like our Prophet (PBUH) taught us, Look at those big towers standing right on the Allah house, gave negative feelings or experiences, This can be taken from 2 perspectives, as you said it is a facility more people will be accommodated, but on the other side it is a business move, more pilgrims more revenue, more visas, more hotels, more infrastructure etc, Let me tell another thing, all the buildings surrounding the Grand Mosque belongs to the Royal family of the Saudi Arabia, , if the grand Mosque extended where the business revenue will go, to Saudi royal

family, Saudi Arabia wants to earn more revenue. Actually Saudi Mixed Hajj with Tourism, but in the reality the tourism sprit is different to Hajj, Saudi government is actually putting his back for Hajj and mixing it with tourism, the commercial activities regarding Hajj should be stop at once, draw a line, and all tourism activities should be across that line, Saudi government gave religious ruling (Fatwa) that all hotels in the premises of the Mecca should be consider the part of the Grand the Mosque, can you believe it now Hajj is running on the Fatwas, now Hajj is not Hajj it is controlled by Saudi government, hotel people told me you can perform the prayers in this hotel as this is declared the part of the Grand Mosque, but in the end he said it was my regret that I couldn't offered my all prayers in the premises of grand Mosque and having lacking of spiritual experience, well this is good for Saudi government because more cash is coming in, I think they should stop putting more pilgrim inside, and I think they should increase the restriction time on pilgrim from offering Hajj which is current 5 but should be increase to 10 years, Like this I think the Hajj sprit should be restored because less commercial activities will take place, Then in this case brother the Hajj is not (Farz) on you, Allah said if you can't afford it financially do not perform it. Yes on the other hand I understand we sometimes do Hajj for status which is a wrong concept, Listen brothers, at the moment poor and rich both pilgrims are going there but they are now classified and segregated which is totally wrong, we are pilgrims should be same there shouldn't be a difference between rich and poor, I have heard that when tourism penetrates in the roots of something that place lost its authenticity, Look now in these 5 star hotels you are enjoying Spa bath and showers, you are eating 36 dishes a day, and you are not coming out from your air condition rooms and offering prayers from there, this is the impact of Tourism on us there in Saudi Arabia, these are all tourism products. Yes if you want to accommodate 5 million pilgrims construct standardised rooms instead of 5star hotels, I want to add something here please, I do not want to name people of my group, they are standing in front of Kaaba, they started offering their prayers but they didn't finish it, and left prayer in the middle went back to their hotels, as they said it was very hot, so I want to say the sprit in Hajji's are decreasing due to the luxury services available in the Mecca, so there are Haji's like this now as well and it is increasing, I saw almost everybody is having this phone there and almost everybody is having headphones as well and performing Tawaf, I am really surprised how a pilgrim can be involved in such a devil's act, we are there for the confessions of our sines but actually we are gaining sins there, when a person start performing Tawaf he is entering in a spiritual zone where he communicate with Allah, say Labik homa Labik loudly, but suddenly phone rang and they went back to the world the

communication from Allah is now easily disconnected due to this Phone technology, they he pilgrim opened his camera and show to world look what I am doing and start taking selfies with different postures. Talking talking and talking on the phone is Hajj now, 100 % it is putting negative impact on the spiritual experience of Hajj, this is now Religious Tourism brother, the pilgrims are becoming tourist now, The haji's are demanding these things now from the tour operators, because the moment they landed on the soil of Saudi Arabia they need to contact their families and friends, and this is our number if you want to contact us you can do it. And people outside also send them each and every news of the external word. When I went to Hajj I bought 2 sim card one for the phone one for the speedy internet, this internet is very important in Hajj now because you can use free WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Webber etc, . But due to weak faith we are enjoying their cyber Hajj not the actual Hajj, if he is religious he will only do worship there but if he is obsessed with worldly items then he is performing in your language a touristic Hajj, Look being a tour operator, this is the demand of pilgrims to have these luxuries, and I am the witness for this, the pilgrim when approach us to buy Hajj package they ask first for luxuries, comforts, the Hajj question will come in the end. Look we are not pushing any pilgrim to buy this sim or that luxury rooms and other luxury amenities, it is they who demand. So therefore accusing tour operators for all of this mess is not correct. We told them morally do not make selfie but this is an individual act, Hajj is now converted in to an industry of hospitality, tourism and telecom sector. If they do not introduce these things there will be no demand, they actually try to derail pilgrims from the religious path, Off course we are all agreed on this and due to this the spiritual experience is going down and down every day. Our spiritual experience is converting into touristic experience, we go to perform Hajj but are we performing it according to Sunnah, no we are doing this for the world, Both parties are involved in Business, pilgrims and Saudi government but more Saudi government, because this is readymade religious market, which will never ever go into loss. They switched their trade strategies into this. Now people are saying Hajj packages actually are contributing in Saudi economy, and also people said now Hajj is the most expensive tour of tourism in the world. Therefore Hajj is a product, can be bought from anywhere in the word, I said this before all Muslim countries should contribute in Hajj facilities not into the luxuries like Saudi is currently doing, these luxuries are the root cause of discrimination between rich and poor, expensiveness of Hajj, making of cyber Hajj, Luxury hospitality, luxury transports etc. these are not facilities these are accessories, and due to this concept Hajj is converting in to religious holidays, Jabal al Rahmah is like a park now, with camel riding, swings for kids, and no . . .

authenticity due to modernism. When our kids read in books the significance of Jabal al Rahmah, and literally then visit that place, it is no less than a picnic spot, therefore the loss of heritage is taking away Islam from the hearts of pilgrims and future generations, Even the Kabba when it was build it was in oval shape not in square shape but due to wear and tear of seasons and extensions from different ruling parties of Mecca, the shape has changed.

When I went in 1989 for Hajj, there was no building at all there and lot of heritage was there, even the well of ZAM ZAM, Ottaman empire didn't damage that much as Saudi did it, because of extension and their religious sect's ideology of Wahhabism. It was an open field and the fortress of Ottoman Empire was on the hill which was visible from Grand Mosque, let me give you an information that Ottoman Empire fortress was knocked down in 2008 maybe and they build Mecca clock tower hotel on it, which is a shame. Because this is now business so anything can be knockdown for builds anything which is commercial, I think it is still authentic as our Prophet (PBUH) is authentic, our Quran is authentic, Hajj never stopped, Its tangibility authenticity is there as well, the Maqam Ibrahim is there, never changed, the Black stone is there never changed. Its intangibility is authentic as well because Hajj never stopped, in any condition up till now, Look Kaaba ancient pictures are like idols now people start hanging these pictures in their houses to keep the history alive, and they respect it a lot, it is symbolic now. A grand Mosque premise is changed on transformational level, concepts are changing, and this is against Islam. Look even in this room we are hanging the ancient Kaaba picture; it is like idol, even in my own house I have old pictures hanging. One of my relative gave me the replica of ancient Kaaba door which I hanged on the wall but due to some reasons it was damaged and my relatives who presented me this gift felt very bad and angry on me, actually we brought Kaaba in our houses now, this is wrong actually, Actually authenticity is also challenged with comfort, look at the place of Saee, fully air-condition marble place, the real surface is vanished. So authenticity is under question, even a place, are unanimously agreed but R2 added that we pilgrims no doubt we are addicted for comforts, and we became very competitive and status conscious people in the context of Hajj, for instance one person did 5 star Hajj so I have to do in a same way, money is not the problem, I want comfort, One day will come that pilgrim sit in the train or standing on the conveyor belt to perform Tawaf, people are also looking for that time as well, they do not care what is heritage, authenticity, Actually Hajj has been commodified since the time of Prophet Mohammad and Abu JAHAL, when Muslim took over Kaaba, Abu Jahal said now they have power and we have nothing, power means : tribal and economical.

Sub Codes

Hajj as Business, Tourism, Pricing, Luxury, Hajj Package, Products, Pilgrim Experiences , Modernisation, Place, Pilgrim, Religion, Hajj ideology, Spiritual Experience, Authenticity, Place, Heritage Saudi Government, Hajj infrastructure Strategies, Hajj Policies, Religious Ideologies, History: Hajj, Pilgrims

Categorisation of Codes

Hajj is Business: Tourism, Luxury, Hajj Package, Commodities, Facilities, Comforts, Pilgrim Supply & Demand, Geographic

Modernisation: Mecca, Pilgrim

Authenticity: Mecca, Heritage, Hajj

Saudi Government: Hajj Infrastructure Strategies, Hajj Policies, Religious Ideology

Spiritual Experience: Materialistic approach in Pilgrim, Weakening Faith, Weakening Hajj values

History: Hajj, Pilgrims

Hierarchy Structure among the categories and codes in order to take out the most important and Final Themes from Focus Group

1)   **History** ----------------------------
2)   **Saudi Government** -------------
3)   **Hajj is Business** --------------------
4)   **Modernisation**----------------------   *Final Themes Emerged from Focus Group*
5)   **Authenticity** ------------------
6)   **Spiritual Experience**---------

Source: Author

5.8.2 Semi-structured interviews: Data analysis

The second stage of the research involved semi-structured interviews probing the interviewees' conscious and subconscious thought processes in order establish their personal background and experiences, and to identify subjective responses to the commodification of the Hajj and its impact on the spiritual experience. As previously explained, interviews with fifty-eight purposively selected participant contributed to the data collected at Stage Two.

 The aim of these interviews was to address specific lines of inquiry, including:

- Exploring the essence of the Hajj as a religious ritual
- Understanding the spiritual journey in terms of Mecca's infrastructure and facilities
- Exploring different Hajj package amenities
- Exploring subjective opinions about the 4- to 5-star hotels buildings surrounding the Grand Mosque
- Exploring spiritual experience of pilgrims under Mecca's modern infrastructure
- Examining the authenticity of the place, event and experience
- Identifying the gap between wealthy and poor pilgrims
- Exploring the importance of luxury amenities in the Hajj
- Defining Islamic values
- Exploring the impact of technologies on the pilgrim
- Exploring and evaluating the spiritual experience
- Exploring the meanings of pilgrim and tourist in the Hajj context
- Evaluating the Hajj as religious tourism
- Revealing the extent of materialism amongst pilgrims
- Exploring the role of contemporary commodities in the Hajj
- Discovering the scale of commodification
- Assessing the role of the Hajj as religious duty or status symbol
- Exploring the financial value of the Hajj

In order to analyse the qualitative data in a systematic way, a thematic analysis was carried out on the semi-structured interview data. Thematic analysis can be understood as a 'way of seeing' and a way of 'making sense of and analysing' that allows the researcher to analyse, process and interpret qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998). More specifically, it can be defined as a method of 'identifying, analysing and reporting

patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). This analytical approach involves the systematic development of 'codes' and 'themes' interpreted from the data. There are distinct phases of thematic analysis (see Table 5.2 below) which can be followed in order to approach the analysis in an ordered and systematic way. As previously described, a full verbatim transcription was carried out of each semi-structured discussion, which was then first read and re-read a number of times before commencing the coding process. The codes and themes in this study were data driven and inductive in nature as opposed to being a priori or deductive codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Whilst the study is interested in the values of commodification and the spiritual experience of a pilgrim in Hajj, it makes no attempt to pre-determine or anticipate what these meanings or values may be, nor how commodification and the spiritual experience is understood and negotiated as a topic by participants. With no definition or framework of commodification and the spiritual experience provided to participants, the codes and themes developed during the analysis were driven by the interests and foci of the participants themselves and the data obtained from the semi-structured discussions and participative observation.

Table 5.2: Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the Process
1) Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2) Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3) Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4) Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Stage 1) and the entire data set (Stage 2).
5) Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6) Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006: 87)

After completing stages 1 and 2 as detailed Table 5.2 – preparing and reading the transcripts, establishing key concepts and codes – the third stage involved the collation of codes into potential themes. This allows for hierarchical structures to be developed, whereby a number of the initial codes may be grouped together into a broader theme that says something about the codes it is comprised of. Stages 4 and 5 reviewing and defining themes, took place continuously and required reflexivity and critical thinking to ensure that the codes were sensitive to the data they contained (i.e. the data coded to each node) and also that each thematic grouping of codes was both insightful and meaningful in terms of the data. This enables the development of a thematic map that stage 4 suggests. The names of codes also evolved as the researcher became more sensitive to the nuances in the data and made decisions about how to present the themes in the overall narrative of the data.

Finally, it is important to note that stage 6 involves a wide range of analytical tasks, not least in terms of building in the interpretation and discussion in order to theorise about the data and the findings. The actual writing up stage is, therefore, one of the most complex and requires a high level of engagement with the data to ensure this is kept at the forefront, to avoid the literature restricting or dominating the presentation of the data driven themes.

5.9 Summary: The strength of the research

This chapter has presented the interpretive and phenomenological philosophical paradigm as the approach adopted in this research. Within this, a qualitative research design is employed, which takes an inductive approach in order to privilege non-expert understandings of commodification of religious tourism and its impact on the spiritual experience of the pilgrim to Mecca, and the range of possible meanings and values that may be relevant from this perspective. The reasons for this approach have been laid out in this chapter, discussing the exploratory nature of the study and the desire to collect rich, thick description in order to uncover or discover the complex commodification understanding with regards with spiritual experience as a dimension of Islamic religious tourism. In total, one focus group and fifty-eight semi-structured interviews were carried out, supplemented by participant observation. The data were subsequently transcribed and analysed using coding and thematic analysis. A thematic framework was produced to illustrate the main themes and sub-themes developed through the analysis and interpretation. This framework is presented at the beginning of the Chapter Six, after which each theme will be discussed alongside verbatim data excerpts in order to render the interpretation transparent and to ensure the participants' expressions can be heard within the study.

Chapter 6

The Research: Outcomes and Analysis

6.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse critically the outcomes of the empirical research in this thesis. As discussed in the preceding chapter, that research was undertaken in two stages. First, an exploratory focus group, comprising respondents who had participated in the Hajj on at least one previous occasion, was undertaken in order to inform the subsequent main phase of the research, the overall purpose being to explore the extent to which commodification (as considered in Chapter Four of this thesis) is transforming the experience of pilgrims to Mecca from one primarily spiritual to one more touristic in nature. Within this broad aim, the research also sought to reveal pilgrims' perceptions of the degree of authenticity and the significance of the pilgrimage.

More specifically, the focus group sought to elicit data as a basis for building an overview of respondents' previous experiences and perceptions of, and general feelings about, the Hajj. In particular, the focus group discussions centred on exploring and revealing the respondents' motivations, spiritual experiences and other outcomes resulting from their previous participation in the Hajj, thereby identifying key themes that would inform the in-depth interviews at the second stage of the research.

In this chapter, these research phases are presented sequentially; first, the outcomes of the focus group are considered before the discussion moves on to the second stage of the research, namely the, semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation. In both sections, the results are presented thematically around the key issues and themes arising from the data analysis. Extensive use is made of respondent quotations in order to illustrate and underpin the principal themes emerging from the interviews; these also serve to reflect the phenomenological nature of this research (see Chapter Five), exemplifying individual respondent's understanding and perceptions of the issues being discussed.

6.1 Focus Group: Themes and analysis (Stage 1)

As established earlier, the first stage of research involved one exploratory focus group comprising pilgrims who had participated in the Hajj on at least one occasion in the previous three years. The purpose of the focus group was to identify broad themes and issues related to the commodification of the Hajj which could then be explored in more depth during the main, second stage of the research which involved observations and semi-structured interviews with pilgrims actually participating in the Hajj.
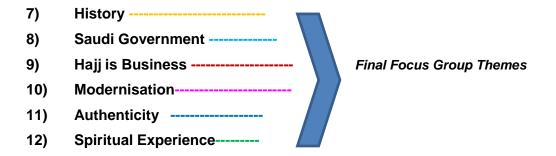
Within a focus group context, general information and opinions can be generated relatively easily. However, in order to facilitate the generation of deeper, more personal responses and contributions – mainly, to create an atmosphere in which respondents are willing and confident to express themselves – it is necessary to adopt an initial relaxed approach through 'icebreaking' conversations. In this focus group, this was achieved by starting the conversations with open-ended inquiries about respondents' previous experience of the Hajj and their more general feelings about the contemporary development of Mecca. Subsequently narrowing the discussion towards a more thematic focus encouraged respondents to reveal more personal feelings and attitudes. As is often the case in focus group research, some respondents spoke more openly than others. Nevertheless, overall the group context allowed for free-flowing discussions and the expression of opinions and ideas that might not have been elicited through more structured, one-to-one interviews.

The data generated through the focus group discussion revealed the respondents' previous experiences of the Hajj, their opinions with regards to the commodification of the religious event and place, as well as a more sensitive or emotional understanding of key themes, such as authenticity, commodification and spirituality. Indeed, although no attempt was made to encourage the group members to discuss these themes in detail, they arose spontaneously during the conversations.

During the analysis of the focus group transcripts, a number of significant open codes initially emerged. In the second round of coding, sub-codes were used to interpret and perceive what was 'going on' in the data collected; these codes can be the same as in the initial round or mostly the reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far. The third round, the categorisation of codes, is when codes are arranged to create categories; when the codes were applied and reapplied to the focus group data, the researcher is codifying – a procedure that allows data to be segregated, clustered, reformed and reconnected in a way to combine connotation and clarification (Punch, 2005: 201-205). The fourth and final task was to create the hierarchy structure among

the categories and codes; this is where the researcher prioritises categorises in order to identify the most important and final themes which can play a pivotal role in qualitative data analysis (see also Chapter Five). The six key themes emerging from this process are summarised in Figure 6.1 below. Each is discussed in more detail in the following sub-sections.

Figure 6.1: Focus Group: Key Themes

7)   **History** ------------------------------

8)   **Saudi Government** ------------

9)   **Hajj is Business** --------------------   *Final Focus Group Themes*

10)   **Modernisation**---------------------

11)   **Authenticity**   ------------------

12)   **Spiritual Experience**---------

Source: Author

6.1.1: History (Theme One)

The focus group participants shared their previous experiences of the Hajj, often adopting an historical perspective. They claimed that, in the past (just 30 to 40 years ago), the Hajj was very simple, characterised by serious worship and respect, and benefiting from local hospitality. They sketched out an image of Mecca as a dusty desert city; the Hajj experience was one of the divine charms of the pilgrimage combined with the authentic heritage of Mecca. They also suggested that, at that time, pilgrims would engage in business only to cover their basic expenses; there were no shops and no hotels in the vicinity of the Grand Mosque. Moreover, the concept of the Hajj package did not exist at that time; there was no intense business in Mecca, and no technology to support the pilgrim experience. One participant saw the past Hajj nostalgically as being alive in the pilgrim's heart, something mainly missing in the contemporary Hajj journey.

These views are summarised by R4's comments:

> In 1970 there was only one road there; now they have two to three roads and now it is one-way traffic. This is a good facility. But on a sad note, it is at the cost of heritage places. Places that were there in 1970 no longer exist, this is due to modernisation.

When I performed my first Hajj in early 1970, at that time Saudi Arabia never considered the Hajj as a business or as tourism; pilgrims were always accepted as the 'Guest of Allah'. There was no mandatory concept of buying a Hajj package or going in a group, it was simple and easy. Though claiming that at that time the Hajj was not in too much demand is not correct. I really enjoyed and remember that Hajj from a religious, spiritual and authenticity perspective.

In 2001 there were no mobile phones; pilgrims had time for each other. Now pilgrims are SMART, they are busy with their phones. In 2001 you couldn't take a picture but now every second someone is taking a selfie. So there is a lot of change.

No, that business is different from current business. In the past, pilgrims used to bring commodities with them to sell in Mecca or during Hajj, only to cover their expenses.

Look, let me put like this. Islam is living in the people's heart, people are still going on the Hajj, but the expectations they take with them are not fulfilled due to commodification, this is my opinion. Look, pictures of the ancient Kaaba are like idols now; people start hanging these pictures in their houses to keep the history alive, and they respect it a lot, it is symbolic now. Look, even in this room there is an ancient Kaaba picture; it is like an idol. Even in my own house I have old pictures hanging.

For this focus group participant, ancient Mecca has vanished as a result of its commodification. Ancient Mecca was never a business hub but only a centre of worship. Pilgrims were considered to be the 'Guest of Allah' rather than tourists; moreover, pilgrims were focused on the devotion of worship and, in sense, divorced themselves from the world and worldly commodities during the Hajj. Nowadays, however, participation in Hajj has been transformed by new rules and regulations whilst, for the sake of development and in the name of facilitation of pilgrims, almost all the built heritage in Mecca has been destroyed. Now, the tangible history of Mecca can only be found in pictures as few if any ancient buildings remain in Mecca.

6.1.2 The Saudi Government (Theme Two)

The focus group participants agreed that the Hajj has been affected by its commodification. In particular, they thought that, responding to the increasing demands of contemporary pilgrims and seeking to gain greater economic advantage from Hajj, the Saudi government has become the main economic player by transforming Mecca and the Hajj into contemporary religious tourism products. It is evident in the literature review that Islam has become more publicly visible and is growing (Yeoman, 2008) whilst, at the same time, Saudi Arabia, which is considered to be the cradle of Islam, has gone through a process of modernisation and globalisation in terms of commerce and mega infrastructural developments, (Azra, 2004; Hefner, 2000; Lukens-Bull, 2005). When the Saudi government recognised the potential economic impact of religious tourism in the late 1990s, the public face of the Hajj began to change both domestically and internationally. Visiting Mecca and undertaking the Hajj appear to be no longer simply a set of rituals, beliefs and principles, but have become a symbolic commodity relevant to pilgrims' social class, demands for lifestyle, modesty and enjoyment (White, 2005). This transformation, driven by the Saudi government, was discussed by the focus group participants:

According to R4:

> Both parties, pilgrims and the Saudi government but more so the Saudi government, never thought 30 years ago to shape Mecca like this. But now they have realised this is an industry to be taken advantage of. Secondly, the oil industry is weakening… particularly why they are concentrating on the Hajj, because this is a ready-made religious market, which will never ever go into loss. They switched their trade strategies into this. Now people are saying that Hajj packages actually are contributing in Saudi economy; they also say that the Hajj is now the most expensive tour in the world.

> Saudi Arabia shouldn't encourage the Hajj as a part of its business strategy. And let me tell you another thing, all the buildings surrounding the Grand Mosque belong to the royal family of Saudi Arabia. So if the Grand Mosque is extended, where will the business revenue go? To the Saudi royal family, directly or indirectly.

> The Saudi government gave a religious ruling (Fatwa) that all hotels in the centre of the Mecca should be considered to be part of the Grand Mosque. Can you believe it? Now the Hajj is running on the Fatwas, now the Hajj is not the Hajj; it is controlled by the Saudi government. Hotel people told me you can

perform the prayers in this hotel as this is declared part of the Grand Mosque (Al-Haram).

I would say Saudi Arabia should do business, but outside Mecca.

In contrast, R2 said:

Look, Saudi like other countries also has day-to-day expenditures; they have a health system, road systems and they also need to take care of their citizens as well. So, to fulfil their country's responsibilities they called on a lot of companies to invest in Hajj operations and, yes, they are earning millions and billions from it. Of course there are gaps, but they are on a learning process and, day by day, they are improving or filling up those gaps. I think they are doing their best and there is no problem with it.

Five of the six focus group participants agreed that, following the decline in the petroleum sector, the Saudi government recognised and designed a new corporate strategy, cashing in on the Hajj. The gates were opened to both domestic and international investors to enhance the infrastructure of Mecca and convert it into contemporary holy city. To develop the business, different Saudi government departments, along with the Hajj Ministry, took control of all Hajj operations, including visa processes, the Hajj quota system, the Hajj agent licencing process, and the transportation, accommodation, food and beverage and telecom sectors. They even changed the religious dynamics of the holy city through the religious ruling that all the hotels situated in Mecca should be considered part of Grand Mosque; thus, prayers can be offered anywhere inside hotel premises. The focus group participants were also generally in agreement that Saudi Arabia should develop business, but not based in Mecca as the sanctity of the holy city becomes diminished. Indeed, the contemporary physical and corporate environment in Mecca was a concern for the focus group members; their relationship with Mecca and the Hajj had become complex as they could not see how the holy city and the Hajj now tied into the traditional elements of simplicity in worship and religion fundamental to the Hajj.

6.1.3 The Hajj is business (Theme Three)

There is overwhelming evidence, as revealed in literature review, that the Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam which involves men and women making a pilgrimage to Mecca. Muslims are supposed to make the journey at least once in their lifetime. The pillar is obligatory for both men and women as long as they are physically fit or financially able to do so. All participants of the focus group considered the Hajj to be a unique religious event and Mecca to be a special place. They attributed the distinctiveness of the Hajj to a number of both tangible and intangible factors, not least the divine beauty and diversity of the Mecca. At the same time, however, the contemporary physical environment of Mecca along with the commodified luxuries now available on the Hajj was a concern for the focus group participants. Indeed, five of them all argued that, based on their previous Hajj experiences, the pilgrimage had become more expensive and, quite simply, had become a massive religious market for business. Their views are supported in the literature, the evidence showing that religious pilgrimages such as Hajj are big business with significant growth potential for the tourism sector. In Saudi Arabia, the Hajj contributes around half of the county's $22.6 billion (85 billion Saudi riyals) earning from tourism (RT, 2016).

Some of the focus group participants suggested ways in which the Hajj has become a business. For example, according to R1:

> First of all, Hajj tour operators, because in the beginning in the 1980s when people went from here there was no Hajj group system. People went on an individual basis, getting their own visas from the Saudi embassy and going straight away, with no hotel bookings, nothing, a very simple process. Now there is the trend in the West; now you can find it everywhere, now everything in the name of facilitation has become business. They provide you with extra services, and every day they are introducing new glittery services. Some of them are necessary but the majority are not. But like this they sell their products, and that is why the Hajj is getting expensive. This is one of the main reasons to me. When the group system started, actually it was Saudi Arabia behind this. They introduced the concept of business to the Hajj. If Saudi didn't encourage it as business, it will never ever become a business. People perform the Hajj in the same manner as they have done for centuries but the Saudi king with the collaboration of Saudi Ministry of Hajj have given it a new shape and converted it into a business.

R3 simply pointed out that:

> In the beginning, when my brother went on the Hajj in 2009, they did it for £800. When I went on the Hajj in 2014, I spend £4000. It was a normal Hajj, not VIP, and therefore it is expensive.

Similarly, R5 observed that:

> Previously, I paid £1700, The Hajj tour operator told us names of the different Hajj packages, such as VIP or VVIP. Mine was economy; it was a 2-star hotel near the Grand Mosque, but it no longer exists.

Focus group member R2, however, was in disagreement with other members, suggesting that the Hajj experience has actually been improved and that, to an extent, it has always been run as a business:

> 20 years ago, when people were performing the Hajj, they took water with them from Mecca to Arafat, Mina and Muzdalifah as, at that time, there was no water there. They also took stoves and food items with them because, at that time, no food was available there. But now these things are available there and have become a type of industry, and the pilgrims can take advantage of these services, so they have no tension during Hajj and can fulfil their aim, which is to undertake the Hajj and worship Allah. Otherwise, if these facilities were not there, when they get up in the morning they would think, where is the water, where is the donkey and the camel carriage, how do we manage tents? To eliminate these problems there are necessary expenditures. Therefore, the Saudi government… facilitated the pilgrims. Yes, you cannot rule out that there are some major businesses involved but we can't blame everything on the Saudi government. Let me tell you something, the Hajj is not a recent business; it is a business existing for centuries, even before Islam it was the business of Mecca.

In response, R1 argued that:

> But the current business strategy is actually taking money from pilgrims, so there is a great deal of difference between current business and the business of the past. Look, previously Mecca's residents believed in the ideology that pilgrims were the guest of Allah; the pilgrims used to tie their camels and keep

their products in their houses without any fear, free of charge, the real guest of Allah, and the real sprit of Hajj. But now you can't find this sprit anywhere on the Hajj, because now it is only business. This is the main reason that the Hajj has become a product now.

To this, R2 (his views undoubtedly influenced by his role as a Hajj tour operator), said:

In earlier times, 50,000 pilgrims went on the Hajj. Now it is five million so the increased demand meant more needs and wants. So, lots of companies are investing in Hajj operations and, yes, they are earning millions and billions from it.

Look, being a tour operator, I know that it is the demand of pilgrims to have these luxuries, and I am the witness to this. When pilgrims approach us to buy a Hajj package, they ask first for luxuries and comforts; the Hajj questions come later. Look, we are not pushing any pilgrim to buy this SIM card or that luxury room or other luxury amenities; it is they who demand these things. So, therefore accusing tour operators for all of this mess is not correct.

Look, pilgrims are for these things because they are available; if they were not nobody would ask for them, so please do not deny that this is not business. The Hajj is now converted in to an industry of the hospitality, tourism and telecom sectors. If they do not introduce these things there will be no demand, they actually try to derail pilgrims from the religious path.

The remaining group members agreed with R2's points, who added that, in his view, pilgrims have become addicted to comforts, and have become very competitive and status conscious in the context of Hajj. He suggested, for instance, that if one person does a 5-star Hajj, another has to so in the same way, money is not the problem.

Nevertheless, R1 said:

I said this before, all Muslim countries should contribute to Hajj facilities, but not developing luxuries like Saudi is currently doing. These luxuries are the root cause of discrimination between rich and poor. The cost of the Hajj, creating the cyber Hajj, luxury hospitality, luxury transport…. these are not facilities, these are accessories, and because of this the Hajj is being converted into a religious holiday.

R2 said:

> Actually, the Hajj has been commodified since the time of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and Abu JAHAL, when Muslims took over Kaaba, Abu Jahal said now they have power and we have nothing, power means: Tribal and Economical.

R2's final point reflects the evidence in the literature review that religious tourism has for centuries been a hub of business activities, including at Mecca, (Vukonic, 1996, 1998, 2000; Sharpley, 2005, 2014; Shepherd, 2000; Shoval, 2000). However, more recently, the intensity of the commodification of Mecca has increased owing to the demand for and supply of Hajj operations, an issue raised by all focus group participants. On the one hand, pilgrims are demanding more comfort and luxury commodities for their spiritual journey and, on the other hand, governments are proposing that religious commodification is nothing new (Ward, 2006: 185). Indeed, many of the great ancient churches and religious places in Europe, such as Santiago de Compostela in Spain, as well as religious places in other parts of the world have been built on the proceeds of the commodification of religion in terms of donations or by selling products and artefacts. It is clear that religious commodification is part and parcel of the contemporary world (Maher, 2012).

The impression to be taken from the focus group discussion that, in the view of the respondents, the Hajj has become a commodity of Islam and Mecca is a product of Saudi Arabia. Mecca and Hajj are highly marketed; the more you pay, the more you can enjoy the Hajj's luxury comforts. Thus, over time, the dynamics of the business strategy of the Hajj have changed. Whereas historically, pilgrims used to do business on the Hajj on a small scale to cover their expenses, it is now the government and the corporate sector that are investing in Mecca and the Hajj operations.

Therefore, it appears that the contemporary Hajj is, for the focus group members at least, defined by the tangible luxury products and services on offer. Most respondents alluded to the special qualities of tourism, luxury hotels, Hajj packages, luxury facilities, comforts, and supply and demand. These were however, discussed as evidence of the business dimension of the Hajj; further exploration is therefore necessary at the interview stage in order to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of this for the Hajj experience.

6.1.4 Modernisation (Theme Four)

The literature review revealed that Mecca remains a focal point for development in Saudi Arabia KSA, largely as a result of the predicted growth in religious tourism and the opportunities offered by the world's most capitalised and expensive real estate, (World Report International, 2010). Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Four, Mecca's development authority approved a 23-year long master plan for the city, which includes accommodating three million Saudis, expatriates and eight million religious pilgrims. However, the development of 5-star hotels, luxury shopping malls, spas and designer shops in Mecca has separated the pilgrims from each other, from their cultural history and from the main objective of the annual congregation of the Hajj. In addition, the popularity and spread of SMART Media Technologies (SMT) is not only transforming the lives of tourists around the world in general, but is impacting on the experience of pilgrims on the Hajj in Saudi Arabia in particular (Brdesse et al., 2013). Indeed, the Saudi government has undertaken a number of initiatives to encourage the use of SMT in the religious tourism industry, to enhance both the operations of the event and SMT experience of pilgrims undertaking the Hajj (Majid, 2016).

In the focus group discussion, this transformation and modernisation of Mecca emerged as a dominant theme:

R4:

> Mecca is full of New York-style buildings.

R5:

> Mecca is totally changed. In fact, I couldn't recognise this holy city; there are 5 - star places everywhere. If you have money you can stay there; if not you can't even dream of it.

R2:

> The day will come when the pilgrim will sit in a train or stand on a conveyor belt to perform Tawaf, people are also looking for that time as well.

R3:

> I am really surprised how a pilgrim can be involved in such a devil's act. We are there for the confessions of our sins, but actually we are gaining sins there. When a person starts to perform Tawaf he is entering a spiritual zone where he communicates with Allah… but suddenly the phone rings and they go back to the real world. Communication with Allah is now easily disconnected owing to this phone technology… then the pilgrim opens his camera and shows the world what he is doing, taking selfies with different postures. Talking, talking and talking on the phone is the Hajj now.

There was consensus amongst the focus group participants that pilgrims to Mecca are praying, but that the feeling of spiritual devotion towards Allah and self-denial from coarseness and evil, which is the focal point of the Hajj, is under question owing to the presence of modern commodities and facilities on the Hajj. Put another way, the modernisation of the Hajj is somehow impacting negatively on the pilgrim's objectives, as they appear more attached to worldly commodities than to the spiritual the objectives of Hajj. These elements of the modern religious experience may present new challenges to a pilgrim's Hajj goals, to the authenticity of the holy place and to the spiritual experience of the holy journey.

6.1.5 Authenticity (Theme Five)

During the focus group discussions, it emerged that the participants' previous experiences of the Hajj and their associations with the Mecca appeared to have resulted in a powerful link between man and Allah. However, the presence of modern commodities and facilities and the overall contemporary development of Mecca were believed by participants to be challenging the authenticity of the place and the religious event. Certainly, it became clear that, for the focus group participants, owing to its modernisation and development, the holy city of Mecca is losing its ancient and historical authentic heritage; the divine city of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) is now presenting itself as the New York of the Middle East.

For Instance, R5 stated:

> Listen brother, I have heard that when tourism penetrates the roots of something, that place loses its authenticity.

According to R4:

> Now Mecca is full of New York-style buildings, and pilgrims are lost in worldly inauthentic commodities. Rather than sharing their Hajj experience with each other, they are discussing their hotel experience and the amenities of their tour packages.

Similarly, R3 said:

> Mount Jabal al Rahmah is like a park now, with camel riding, swings for kids and no… authenticity due to modernisation. When our kids read in books the significance of Jabal al Rahmah, and literally then visit that place, it is no less than a picnic spot; therefore, the loss of heritage is taking away Islam from the hearts of pilgrims and future generations.

> Even the Kaaba, when it was built, it was in oval, not square in shape. But due to wear and tear of the seasons and extensions by different ruling parties of Mecca, the shape has changed.

R5 explained in more detail:

> When I went on the Hajj in 1989, there was no building at all there and lot of heritage was there, even the well of Zam Zam. The Ottaman Empire didn't damage that much as Saudi did because of extension and their religious sect's ideology of Wahhabism.

> It was an open field and the fortress of Ottoman Empire was on the hill which was visible from Grand Mosque… the Ottoman Empire fortress was knocked down in 2008 maybe, and they built the Mecca Clock Tower Hotel on it, which is a shame. Because this is now business, so anything can be knocked down to build anything which is commercial.

> Actually, authenticity is also challenged with comfort. Look at the place of Saee, fully air-condition marble place, the real surface is vanished. So authenticity is under question, even a place.

R2 observed that:

> Actually, people forget everything very quickly; they do not care what is heritage, authenticity.

Interestingly, R4 added:

> I think it is still authentic as our Prophet (PBUH) is authentic, our Quran is authentic. Its tangible authenticity is there as well, the Maqam Ibrahim is there, never changed, the Black stone is there never changed. Its intangibility is authentic as well because the Hajj has never stopped, in any condition…

Thus, the participants in the focus group agreed that the presence of inauthentic material commodities in Mecca is impacting negatively on the authenticity of the Holy City, on religious rituals and on the spiritual experience of pilgrims. In so doing, they confirmed the argument in the literature that, once a religious destination or event is sold in the tourism market it becomes a commodity (i.e. a product or experience with financial value) and, as a consequence, it loses its authenticity to pilgrim/tourists (Shepherd, 2002). For the participants, the experience of authenticity or otherwise of contemporary Mecca, the ritual of Hajj and their subsequent social identity (Haji) is in jeopardy.

At the same time, however, they recognised that the ideology of Hajj is authentic and divine, based on Islamic laws; the Holy Quran is genuine, the Kaaba circumambulation and the location of the Kaaba are authentic, and performing 'Sa'ee' is authentic although there no longer exist the hills of Al-Safa and Al-Marwah. Islam is still present in the hearts of pilgrims yet, owing to the commodification of Mecca, the pilgrim's true sense of authentic spirituality is in jeopardy. The spiritual authenticity of the holy city and the spiritual experience of pilgrims have become contaminated as both pilgrims and place have become victims of material commodities.

6.1.6 Spiritual experience (Theme Six)

As discussed throughout this thesis, the escalating demand for religious tourism and the desire to achieve maximum economic benefits has resulted in the Saudi government enhancing the hospitality, tourism and telecom sectors in general and transforming Mecca's tourism infrastructure, in particular, developing it into a contemporary holy city. According to the focus group participants, this commodification process is impacting negatively on the spiritual experience of religious pilgrims/tourists.

They suggested that the effects of commodification are changing pilgrims' behaviour and that they are becoming more materialistic. Specifically, the contemporary highly-branded hospitality services, the modern tourism infrastructure and the introduction of SMART technology in Mecca are some of the causes of the dilution of pilgrim's spiritual experience and its transformation into a touristic experience, an experience which competes with and jeopardises the moralities of the Islamic religious journey of the Hajj and the lessons of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) based on simplicity, equality, and no ostentation.

For example, R4 said:

> When I performed the Hajj in 1970 it was very simple, people respected pilgrims a lot. Saudi Arabia shouldn't encourage the Hajj as a part of their business strategy, but just extend the very basic facilities for pilgrims. It could have been as simple as it used to be in the '70s, when pilgrims were performing the Hajj like Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did: simple, without ostentation, no discrimination between poor and rich, sacrifice of the soul, and only staunch worship.

R5 stated that:

> I think the Hajj in 2001 was easy; there was no construction going on. Now, too much construction, and your worship runs to a timetable now. I have feeling everybody was running left and right but very few are concentrating towards worship.

R3 added:

> I learned one thing from this experience; the, pilgrim is now looking for comforts during the Hajj now, and they can't resist even a small discomfort.

> These new buildings are sending the wrong messages. For instance, when I went on the roof top of the hotel I felt that Allah's house is under your feet, very sad, very painful. When we are in our houses, we always say do not face your feet towards Mosque and do not make your home higher than the Mosque, but what is happening in Mecca, is out of mind. The real actual house of Allah in this condition really has a negative impact on your spiritual experience.

Similarly, R1 complained that:

> If Saudi wants to promote tourism, they should do it outside Mecca, no problem. Facilitate people there, and earn money from people, there. What's happening currently to the Hajj according to me is not reasonable at all, and therefore it is not the Hajj like our Prophet (PBUH) taught us.

> Look at those big towers standing right on the Allah house; they give negative feelings or experiences.

R4 said:

> I want to add something here please. I do not want to name the people in my group, but they are standing in front of Kaaba, they started offering their prayers but they didn't finish them. They left their prayers in the middle and went back to their hotels, as they said it was very hot. So, I want to say the spirituality of Hajjis is decreasing owing to the luxury services available in the Mecca. There, are Hajis like this now, and it is increasing.

R3 agreed:

> 100 percent it is having a negative impact on the spiritual experience of the Hajj; this is now religious tourism brother, the pilgrims are becoming tourist now.

And R6 summarised:

> Of course, we are all agreed on this and because of this the spiritual experience is going down and down every day. Our spiritual experience is converting into a touristic experience, we go to perform Hajj but are we performing it according to Sunnah? No, we are doing this for the world.

Generally, then, the outcomes of preliminary focus group research conducted in the UK suggests that, for these pilgrims at least, the Hajj has become commodified; not only has the experience become more 'touristic', but they also seek out greater comfort and luxury, indicating that the pilgrimage has become more of a 'branded', commodified experience. However, whilst the focus group provided some clear and rich data, highlighting a number of key themes and issues, it did not allow for an understanding of individual perspectives. Indeed, although most respondents talked openly, the focus

group context did not permit the development of individual strands of conversation. Nevertheless, the data generated established a framework and set issues to be explored in greater depth and detail in the subsequent semi-structured in-depth interviews in the second phase of the research.

6.2 Semi-structured in-depth interviews (Stage Two)

The second stage of the research involved semi-structured in-depth interviews with pilgrims participating in the Hajj in 2016, the purpose being to explore in depth their understanding of their spiritual experiences, their recognition and responses to the commodification of the Hajj and the extent to which they considered their experience to be authentic. As detailed in Chapter Five, this stage involved fifty-eight participants, the selection of whom was undertaken through a combination of personal connections and random and snowballing data collection strategies. The specific lines of enquiry followed in the interviews included:

- Exploring the spiritual importance/ value of Hajj.
- Exploring critically how the Hajj and Mecca is being commodified.
- Identifying which contemporary commodities and in Mecca impact upon the pilgrim's spiritual behaviour.
- Considering how pilgrims perceive the role of contemporary tourism commodities during the Hajj.
- Exploring how contemporary tourism commodities challenge the authenticity of the holy place, the event and the pilgrim's experience.
- Exploring whether such materialistic commodification potentially transforms the pilgrim's spiritual experience into one more touristic.

As with the exploratory focus group research at Stage One, a number of clear themes emerged from the analysis of the data generated. The following discussion is, therefore, again structured around these themes which, collectively, seek to provide answers to the overall research question that this thesis addresses. In other words, based on the outcomes of the interviews, the chapter now attempts to build a picture of how contemporary pilgrims experience the Hajj. It must be acknowledged, of course, that an individual pilgrim's experience might be influenced by a variety of personal and social factors beyond the specific context of the Hajj. Nevertheless, the purpose here is to explore the extent to which the specific process of commodification of Mecca and the Hajj, as discussed in Chapter Four, impacts on the pilgrim's experience. After commencing with a discussion of the perceived significance and value of the Hajj to the

interviewees, the subsequent sections are structured to illustrate the contrast between the experiences of the pilgrim and their sense of commodification and of the authenticity of the Hajj and Mecca. Finally, the experience of the pilgrim as either spiritual or touristic (or a combination of both) is considered. The specific themes that are now discussed are:

- The spiritual significance and value of the Hajj (Theme One)
- The commodification of the Hajj (Theme Two)
- Authenticity of the Mecca and the Hajj (Theme Three)
- The commodified spiritual experience of the pilgrim (Theme Four)
- The commodified touristic experience of the pilgrim (Theme Five)

6.2.1 The spiritual significance and value of the Hajj (Theme One)

Each interview with those respondents who were participating in the Hajj commenced with questions that sought to elicit the meaning or significance of the Hajj, its importance to them as Muslims. In so doing, the questions sought to establish a conceptual 'baseline' against which the influences of commodification could be measured.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, most participants referred explicitly to the obligation of all able Muslims to undertake the Hajj to Mecca. Its significance to them lies in this obligation and in its role as the fifth pillar of Islam. Some also noted that Muslims have travelled to the Mecca from every part of the world to perform their religious rites and to perform Tawaf around the Kaaba since the time it was built by Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) to be the first house for the worship of Allah; specifically, where Allah would be worshipped according to guidance and true vision with a pure belief free from superstition and erroneous concepts.

In answering this question and to explain the significance of the Hajj, a few interviewees quoted the following verse from the Quran (Surah Al 'Imran, 3: 96-97):

> Allah, the Exalted, said: Indeed, the first house [of worship] established for mankind was that at Bakkah [Mecca] – blessed and a guidance for the world. In it are clear signs [as] Maqam Ibrahim. And whoever enters it shall be safe. And [due] to Allah from the people is a pilgrimage [Hajj] to the House for whoever is able to find thereto a way. But whoever disbelieves [by refusal] then indeed, Allah is free from need of the world.

Beyond these 'formal' responses, a number of interviewees offered a more personal reflection on the significance and value of the Hajj to them, although most alluded to the sense of duty as Muslims to undertake it. For example, R9 said:

> The Hajj is a mandatory worship and is the religious duty. One of the things I will achieve from the Hajj that my all previous sins will be wiped out and I shall became like an infant who has no sins in his or her account. The Prophet said… (Al Hajj Mubrure laisa ho jiza min al jana) that Hajj Mabroure if accepted by Allah the result will be heaven, and in another Hadith Prophet said ……….Arabic Hadith….. Meaning a person who performed Hajj and didn't say a single bad word, fight or commit a single sin he will return to his/her house like his mother gave him/her birth now, so I am also achieving self-control over me while performing Hajj.

Another interviewee (R1) stated simply that:

> I am doing this Hajj like our Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and for his happiness, so I came here to obey his orders.

R17 explained the significance of the Hajj as follows:

> I think the Hajj for me personally is an opportunity to create a bridge between me and Allah; it is an opportunity to find my inner spirituality and also to know the purpose of being in this world. One day we all die so it is an opportunity to clean the past sins so at angel's day we have no sin or fewer sins on our account. So basically, we are here to please Allah and to fulfil our religious duty. Also, at the end of the world we all want to go to (janat) heaven so this is the place where we can take Allah blessings and learn how we can achieve the goodness of the world. It is not only for (Akhira) but also for the world.

Another (R19) emphasised the obligatory nature of the Hajj:

> First of all it is obligatory worship which needs to be done. Being a believer of Islam, you do things which are logical or not, but most important you do things which your creator ordered you to do, when you submit to this journey you do not follow your rules, you follow only Allah's rules. For instance, when you open your Facebook account, terms and conditions are applied; you do not say I want to follow my terms and condition, but you follow the company's conditions.

Similarly, you choose religion but you need to follow religious terms and conditions and, therefore, as a believer I need to follow what Islam is saying and therefore I am here to perform Hajj.

Others also referred to the duty of Muslims to undertake the Hajj:

It is spiritually the mandatory duty for each and every Muslim to perform the Hajj once in a life time. He/she must gather the money to perform the Hajj once in their life, if they want to please Allah. This is the only way for asking forgiveness. (R20)

I was born as Muslim but if you do not fulfil the duty of the Hajj you can't consider yourself as a full Muslim. Therefore, I have decided to feel the place to have the experience of the Hajj; it gave me self-satisfaction, and a sense that I became a full Muslim. For me it is like a 'knocking the door'. (R26)

This is the instruction from Allah therefore we must do it. (R27)

And for R34, participating in the Hajj offered the opportunity to communicate with Allah:

I think the Hajj is the best guidance for pilgrim teaching how to walk on the ways of the religion and how to be connected with Allah forever. Once you are connected with Allah, then you have started to find the origin of it and the origin Allah gave us in the shape of the Kaaba. The Kaaba is not Allah, it is a stone, it is made of bricks and mortar, but Allah gave the Kaaba the privilege to act as a communication bridge between the pilgrim and Allah. This is like a link between Allah and the pilgrim. So I came to this origin to communicate with Allah.

Importantly, the responses of the interviewees collectively suggest that although the Hajj is undoubtedly one of the largest and most spectacular religious assemblies in the world, it is more than just a journey or pilgrimage to holy lands and connecting with the historical legacy of Islam. Rather, there are significant and powerful spiritual meanings enclosed within the rites of the Hajj, which itself must be performed once in the lifetime of all adult Muslims who can afford the journey (Qur'an 3:197). Certainly, the Hajj is significant as a collective form of obligatory worship; to the individual pilgrim, it is fulfilling the duty to undertake the Hajj as well as worshipping Allah together with many others.

In the context of this research, this is an important (though not unexpected) outcome, in as much as the potential for the spirituality of a pilgrim's experience to be diminished or transformed by commodification may be tempered by the overall significance of the Hajj. In others words, the spiritual element of voluntary individual participation in a religious journey or pilgrimage may be more susceptible to external influence (i.e. commodification) than that of a deep-rooted, obligated ritual. This issue will be addressed later in this chapter.

6.2.1.1 The Hajj as a pillar of Islam

As noted in the literature review, there are five pillars of Islam: Shahada, Salah, Ramadan, Zakat and Hajj (see Chapter Four). However, the term pillar is more of an analogy used to describe the five components on which the very core of the Islamic faith is based. These are the five key elements that define a person as a Muslim; five tasks that Allah has made compulsory on all able Muslims.

A majority of the interviewees, when discussing the significance of the Hajj, referred to it as one of the pillars of Islam, and one different from other pillars. It is an act, the performance of which is dependent on one's location; a journey is undertaken that could well be lengthy and difficult.

> Hajj is the fifth Mandatory Pillar of Islam and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said if you can afford it financially and physically one should perform Hajj. (R6)

> Obviously the Hajj is the mandatory pillar of Islam, especially for those who can financially and physically capable, and it is different from other pillars such as Zakat and Ramadan, this pillar is one of the most important pillars of Islam. (R1)

When referring to the Hajj as a pillar of Islam, some interviewees suggested that it is the only one of the five that can change pilgrim's lives. For example, R8 claimed that:

> Actually, I am going to discover my whole life in the Hajj, my past, present and my future. It is very important for me to full fill this fifth pillar of Islam so that I can please my Allah and his Prophet Mohammad. Also, it is a time that I can amend my lifestyle and spends my rest of life like our Prophet (PBUH) told us. Hajj is the one and only pillar of Islam which can change your life.

Similarly, R11 stated that:

The Hajj is a duty and the fifth pillar of Islam, very important for us, though it is blind faith. Bu it is important and when you come here; in reality, you feel like a different person and it is true, the Hajj is the pillar which can bring lot of change in your personality and character.

The consensus view of the participants appeared to be that Hajj increases the element of tolerance in the character of pilgrim. The Hajj, as a religious Islamic pillar, acs like a game changer in the lives of pilgrims; and pilgrims take Hajj as an opportunity to amend their lives by practising it. R33 said…

This is life time achievement, the Hajj completely changes the life of humans.

Thus, on the one hand, the research suggests that the Hajj is a significant change agent in the lives of pilgrims. But on the other hand, the current literature (e.g. Shepherd, 2002) abounds with examples of how once the destination or event is promoted in the tourism market it becomes a commodity, with consequences of the nature of the religious experience. Therefore, the next theme of this research considers what impacts commodification is having on Mecca and the Hajj, which is one of the main objectives of this study.

6.2.2 Commodification of the Hajj (Theme Two)

Given the overall question that this thesis is addressing – namely, the extent to which the commodification of the Hajj impacts upon pilgrim's spiritual experiences – one fundamental purpose of the interviews was to explore respondents' recognition and understanding of that commodification process. This proved to be both relatively simple yet, at the same time, challenging. On the one hand, identifying the number of interviewees who considered that the Hajj has become commodified was relatively straightforward; of the fifty-eight participants, a total of fifty indicated that they believed this had occurred / was occurring, six were unsure and the remaining two did not wish to comment as discussing the Hajj in the context of business contracted their religious beliefs. On the other hand, as the process of interviews commenced and progressed, it became increasingly evident that, to the interviewees, the concept of commodification as applied to the Hajj was both complex and abstract, an amalgam of both objective and subjective elements that, collectively, they found difficult to define or understand. More simply stated, although the interviewees recognised the increased commercialisation of the Hajj – and during the interviews referred to topics such as business, marketing and tourism, all of which are related to the commodification process – they found it difficult to answer questions that referred directly to

commodification. Hence, it became necessary to explore this issue from a number of perspectives which, collectively, would contribute to an overall 'picture' of commodification.

During the research, it was observed that, in the first few days of the Hajj, many pilgrims were discussing the costs involved and, in particular, how expensive it was to participate in the Hajj. This offered the opportunity to start investigating the key issue of the contemporary commodification of the Hajj by focusing on simple questions about which the pilgrims were clearly concerned: Is Hajj expensive now? And if so, how and why?

Unsurprisingly, the great majority of interviewees were unequivocal in their responses; to them, the Hajj was not only expensive, but very expensive. Perhaps more surprising, however, was the variety of perceived reasons suggested for this level of cost. The following list summarises the main reasons that emerged during the interviews:

- Saudi Arabia is seeking to earn massive revenues from the Guest of Allah.
- Other Islamic countries are similarly following the business strategy of Saudi Arabia.
- There is financial corruption related to the Hajj amongst different Islamic governments.
- The government is building only expensive, star-branded hotels within Mecca.
- The government is also promoting star-branded luxury services and facilities in the field of Arafat and in the tent city of Mina.
- An emphasis on luxury transport.
- An emphasis on luxury lavish food and beverages.
- Saudi Arabia is seeking to attract luxury markets of pilgrims.
- Limited Hajj package agents' licenses in developed world increases prices.
- The presence of many Hajj sub-agents in the market.
- Promoting the Hajj on different media platforms.
- With a focus on luxury markets, new classifications of Hajj packages have emerged, such as 3 to 5 star Hajj or VIP to VVIP Hajj.
- The Hajj can now only be undertaken in groups.
- No tailor-made Hajj package is available.
- Hotel prices are set depending on the distance from the holy place and according to the pilgrim's group country of origin.
- More Hajj quotas are given to private Hajj tour operators than to governments.

- Exploitation of increasing demand for the Hajj in the Muslim world.
- The change in pilgrims' buying behaviour.

A number of respondents explained in more detail. For example, according to R37:

> The Hajj is very expensive. It is expensive because of the middle man. You can't design your own package; this group system makes it expensive. Secondly, the trend of 5-star hajj packages is increasing now. I came here before; in the past there were a lot of bed and breakfast hotels here, now nothing, so this luxury trend and the middle man has made the Hajj expensive. I am from Huddersfield, UK. Wherever we went to buy the package, the story began with star ranking packages.

Similarly, R15 lamented:

> Look, this is business. Travel agents are making money, everywhere there are star hotels brands, businessmen are selling place as per square meter meaning the nearer you are the more expensive it is. Transport, food and beverages companies, catering companies are all making money. In fact, governments are making money from it; even there are underground people who are making money from it. As I mentioned before, if you do not have a Hajj visa one can bribe the Saudi police to enter the city of Mecca. In the Hajj season, normal rooms in the hotels which are even far from the Mosque you will get for a minimum in 700 Riyal without any star brand. Look, if you compare the buildings of Mecca and Madinah, you will notice one thing, that buildings in Mecca stand absolutely on the head of the Kaaba, meaning a better room view, also next to Mosque, but very expensive.

Certainly, there was a unanimous feeling amongst interviewees that the Hajj had become excessively expensive, and that reason for this was primarily that it had become a business. This concurs with the claim of Kitiarsa (2008: 11) who argues that religious events have become common markets in which the purchase, sale and exchange of commodities occur. Additionally, in this context the research also supports the work of others who consider how business and marketing strategies have been adopted to optimise the economic benefits of religious (Einstein, 2008; Henn, 2008; Iannaccone, 1991; Jackson, 1999a, 1999b; Roof, 1999; Smith, 2001; Twitchell, 2004; Wiegele, 2005; Wilson, 2008).

Indeed, given both the respondents' comments surrounding the reasons underlying the expense of the Hajj and the trend, as identified earlier in this thesis, for governments and destinations to view religious tourism as a business opportunity in order to optimise economic returns to the destination, the interviews sought to elicit respondents' understanding of the Hajj as a business as one factor in its overall commodification.

6.2.2.1 The Hajj as business

In exploring respondents' understanding of the Hajj as a business, the interviews explored the idea of how and why the Hajj had become a business, the aim being to establish a broader contemporary approach to sacredness that embraces both religious and corporate expressions.

In the interviews, a minority of respondents expressed the view that, from an Islamic perspective, the Hajj is not a business but, rather, a divine journey. The majority, however, agreed that it is business from both a corporate and religious perspective. Indeed, some suggested that, without the religious context of Saudi Arabia, few would visit the country. Other than businessmen, there would be no tourism; it is only because of religious obligations that pilgrims travel to Saudi Arabia. As R50 put it, 'Saudi is not a country; it is a religious tourism industry'. Furthermore, a number of respondents argued that, because it is a business, fewer people have the opportunity to participate in the Hajj under reduced government quota schemes and hence are obliged to depend on the private sector. One respondent revealed, for example, that in Pakistan it is sometimes necessary to wait up to three years to join the Hajj under the government scheme. Therefore, as a last resort, it is necessary to buy a Hajj package through a private Hajj agent, which guarantees attendance but at a high cost.

As another (R12) explained:

> If you talk about South East Asian countries where I am from, pilgrims they give their Hajj applications to governments and wait for the Hajj lottery draw. They are not sure whether they are going on the Hajj or not because they are relying on the government Hajj draw. But if you have money today, like six or seven thousand dollars, you will definitely go on the Hajj. So, there are actually two markets in your own home country, one public sector the other the private sector. Therefore, this is a business now.

More generally, R30 stated:

Look son, it is a business. Indeed, everyone is coming here with millions of rupees, dollar and pounds and spent it in this country. Even from poor countries, minimum each Haji is bringing $4000 with them and spending it in this country. And whatever you are watching, here is nothing but the money. People of my class spent 15,000 dollars; say three million people are here so three million times minimum amount of 4000 dollars equals twelve billion U.S. dollars. Strictly speaking, this is the minimum revenue which is contributing to the economy of Saudi Arabia every year, and this is only Hajj. If you take Ramadan Umrah, that revenue is higher than Hajj. Look at countries like the UK, France and Italy where the tourist goes to see, to look around, and here people come on pilgrimage but spending fifty times higher than tourist, so you tell me is that a business or not?

According to another (R27):

Yes, I think so, it is too much profit oriented. Look, take the small shopkeepers in Mecca, they are rude and making two hundred percent profit, even from a cup of tea. The rest of the game is out of mind, this is organised business.

Similarly, others suggested that the Hajj has become a business:

Well, we shouldn't say it like this, as it is still worship, but generally yes, the Saudi government is earning billions of dollars from this religious ritual. (R35)

One hundred percent it is business. There is no hurdle if you have money, money matters now. If you have money for you and for your family, come anytime. Me and my wife thought now we have money for kids, for family, so I went to a private tour agent and I bought the package in one hour and within ten days the agent told us we are leaving the next week. (R1)

Furthermore, during the interviews the respondents concurred with the view of others that the commodification of religion and religious events is not new, but has been occurring for centuries, (Berger 1999; Berger et al., 2008; Moore 1994; Twitchell, 2007; Ward, 2006). For example, R53 observed that:

I think it was always a business. People always came here to perform Hajj, even at the time of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). This is the business of Mecca,

and Meccans have been doing this for ages. From this they always made their money.

Through further probing of participants' perceptions, more realities regarding the Hajj as a business were revealed. For example, some participants argued that Saudi Arabia is now offering luxury Hajj services for two reasons. First, one 'luxury' pilgrim pays the same as three poor pilgrims and, second, pilgrims themselves are increasingly demanding luxury and comfort:

> The Hajj is not meant to be luxury but the trend for the people is now luxury. It is like a 5-star luxury holiday now, the real meaning of the Hajj is lost… The tour agent makes it more exciting for you as well, like Platinum Hajj package or gold and so on. (R55)

Additionally, it was suggested that Saudi Arabia sees these luxuries as facilities for the pilgrims, but this is not the case. Predominantly, there is a difference between facility and luxury. As R55 went on to explain:

> A facility is something you need to have, like basic things like water for drinking. It becomes a luxury when they promise you extra space, extra cold rooms; we have 5-star air-conditioned coaches, everything here is luxury. First class service is not average, this is luxury. One hundred percent it is a business and the Hajj is product. It is available in travel agents all over the world. When I performed my first Hajj, anybody could, anytime, with no involvement of any agent, no groups, no need for booking a hotel. But you see, agents are also doing hard work; they need to run their households as well so they have to make profit out of it, but they are sometimes cheaters as well. Sometimes they do not full fill their promises and they leave pilgrims in the middle of nowhere, which is un-Islamic.

From this research, then, is clear that from the pilgrims' perspective the Hajj has become a business. As such, it is no different from many other major religious events and destinations around the world (Sharpley, 2009; Timothy, 2006; Vukonic, 1996). Indeed, it can be argued that the contemporary luxury and commodified infrastructure of Mecca gives the impression that the Hajj has become a product of Islam which can be marketed, bought and designed from both the private and public sector. The only obligatory thing required to perform the Hajj appears to be 'money'.

6.2.2.2 The Hajj as a product of Islam

The extant literature on religious tourism offers many examples of the commoditisation and commodification of religion, as religion and its rituals became a product and are made available in the market like other religious products (Einstein, 2008; Finke and Lannaccone, 1993; Haq et al., 2009; Kale, 2004; Moore, 1994). Exploring this issue further in the interviews, R39 remarked:

> Look you see, tour guides, operators, in fact everybody is making money out of the Hajj, because having so many people here from all over the world, people are travelling and they need things, of course. I mean this is a business, people want places to eat, shelter, drink, they need transport and technologies, so of course the market is there and the people are taking advantage of that. You see, the Saudis are expanding Al-Haram and hotels like anything; it is not that they will go serve pilgrims, they are looking for more people in the future, not to serve Islam but to make revenue, and this is only possible when you fulfil all the criteria of developing product and business.

In contrast, R52 said:

> In that case, yes, but we should call it Hajj, not a product. But yes, I know where you are coming from, yes correct. Yes, if someone has money then I would say he can buy a Hajj package any time, but if you do not have money you can't come on the Hajj unless a miracle happens. So yes, you are correct, but I will not call the Hajj a product but I really like your thesis topic.

The results of the research suggest that pilgrims on the Hajj recognise and accept that they need to spend money on commodities and products to fulfil their religious commitments; that, the Hajj has, in effect, acquired an exchange value, and hence commodified. On the basis of responses and points raised in the literature (Ammerman 2007; Chhabra, 2010; Cohen, 1988; Einstein, 2008; Marranci, 2010; Shepherd, 2002: 188) it could be argued that religion is one of the means of producing religious products and that consumers have a belief in religion and trust in the commodification process to accomplish their religious wants and needs as an exchange of values. Thus, religion has become a commodity, and commodification which does not fundamentally eliminate the meaning of religious products, although it might transform it.

6.2.2.3 Marketing of the Hajj

A key sub-theme implicit in interview responses with regards to the commodification of the Hajj in general and its transformation into a business in particular are the role and influence of marketing. Generally, there is evidence in the literature that religion and religious products are predominantly promoted and marketed via religious events, festivals and religious tourism (Kitiarsa, 2008; Pigott, 2010; Rustom, 2008) and that the production, marketing and consumption of religious products (and experiences) are basic features of popular religion nowadays.

From the interviews, it became clear that the manner in which the Hajj is now consumed very much reflects how it is packaged and marketed. Indeed, the necessity to create and sell Hajj 'packages' in response to the Saudi government's regulation that made it mandatory to travel in groups is not only explicit evidence of the marketing of the Hajj, but also led directly to the creation and promotion of different types of packages, or the marketing of different Hajj products that appeal to different market segments, thereby promoting exclusivity within the Hajj:

> Brother this is business pure business. The more luxury, the more you will be famous. More pilgrims will buy packages from you as majority of pilgrims are looking for comfort. (R6)

> *Interviewer:* So you are telling me the pilgrim is concentrating more on comfort than on the real spiritual experience?

> Yes, absolutely. The Hajj is not only the Hajj now, now these luxuries are not only limited to Mecca and Madinah; they are extended up to Arafat and Mina; there are VIP services available in both locations. Tent (Muktab) number 1 to 10 came under VVIP criteria and the middle class pilgrims are under 50 to 90 Muktab numbers and they are very far from the Mount and fields of Muzdilfah and Mina.

Other respondents indicated how they preferred higher quality packages. For example:

> Since I came on a 5-star package, my experience is far better than the government package. The private package is very comfortable, nice food, nice accommodation with extra services, and I am living near to mosque as well, so I prefer the private Hajj package but price-wise the government package is good. (R33)

One respondent (R20), a pilgrim who was undertaking the Hajj on an economy package, was asked if he would go on 5-star Hajj package if he was given it, or if he could afford it. He answered:

> Yes, I would if there is the opportunity; all the 5-star hotels, they are standing right standing by the Kaaba. Then we can also go back to our rooms and sleep, then we can enjoy the food for what we paid for. Currently, we paid for the food but can't eat that food because for that we need to go to our hotel which is very far, so we are bearing extra cost of the food as well every day.

In short, many respondents indicated they would go on the most luxurious package they could afford, primarily for reasons of ease and comfort but, in some circumstances, for prestige. As R47 commented:

> Yes, they classified Hajj packages in a way so they can catch the attention of the pilgrims. Now different pilgrims are in the market, middle class pilgrims will look for Bronze Hajj packages whereas the rich will look for gold and the ultra-rich for platinum packages. Actually, apart from at the Grand Mosque, basically we are not equal now in the Hajj. Marketing classifications have segregated pilgrims now, and this has started to cause a social and economic inferiority complex among Hajis.

On the basis of the above responses, it is possible to infer that the Hajj is marketed as different packages all around the world, an approach that characterises major wholesale and retail of commodification methods throughout modern civilisation. This in turn would suggest that, in support of Moore's (1994) view, religion is now heavily marketed and that, in particular, religion has become a commodity within wider tourism markets. Moreover, an analysis of the data generated from the semi-structured interviews reveals that, as an outcome of the marketing of the Hajj, new pilgrim markets are emerging which, for the purpose of this discussion, can be broadly divided into, first, the branded pilgrim market and second, the non-branded pilgrim market, terms used by one respondent (R8):

> I am wordless and embarrassed I think this [the Hajj] is more or less like a religious holiday now. I think what's happening now, two markets of pilgrims have already emerged, branded pilgrims and non-branded pilgrims. And what I am scared is that the economic and social difference between them will be

increased, causing discrimination between poor and rich pilgrim. This is a sensitive time for Muslims to think about their Hajj future. One day, the branded pilgrim will perform circumambulation on a helicopter while the non-branded pilgrim will wave his hand to him from the ground.

6.2.2.4 Branded and non-branded pilgrims on the Hajj

From the research, there is ample evidence to support the claim that two visible markets have already emerged – the branded pilgrim and the non-branded pilgrim – as an outcome of the commodification of the Hajj. Indeed, respondents from both 'markets' acknowledged this to be the case. Interestingly, however, pilgrims from each market accused the other for the emergence of this dichotomy, although a majority agreed that it was in the process of luxury market commodification segmentation rather than any theological influence that its cause could be found. More specifically, respondents suggested three reasons for the emergence of the two markets. First, some 'branded' pilgrims argued that they are not responsible; rather, it is Allah who blessed them with lots of wealth and, therefore, they are spending on and enjoying lavish luxuries on the Hajj luxuries. Second, it was argued that Allah has created poor people as well, the so-called non-branded pilgrims, and blessed them with less or no money. This is why they are unable to afford star-rated facilities and services on the Hajj and it is for this for this reason that they criticising branded pilgrims for the creation of this luxury Hajj market. And third, some respondents suggested that branded and non-branded behaviour simply reflects the lifestyles of pilgrims back home. For instance, the branded Haji market segment interacts with branded products in their daily lives, whereas non-branded Hajis are struggling more and rarely consume branded or luxury products owing to financial constraints.

Irrespective of these arguments, however, the data reveal the consequences of the emergence of these two markets, namely, the increasing distinction between wealthier and poorer pilgrims, a distinction that contradicts the Hajj principle of equality.

As R11 observed:

> Yes, it is creating the economic and social gap between rich and poor pilgrims every day, and the future for poor or middle class pilgrims on the Hajj is not very bright. Especially in Indonesia, there we say Haji plus vs. regular Haji; these two markets are now present in Indonesia owing to the economic gap. If we want to play as Haji plus, we need one hundred and thirty-five million Rupiah and for

regular Haji it is much less, you can see the difference. Actually, again, 'Hajj is like businesses'.

In a similar but more optimistic vein, R6 said:

> Absolutely, one pilgrim is waiting in his hotel room for Azan [call to worship] and one is living very far from Mosque and spends the whole of his day inside Mosque; he can't go back because it costs him a lot. But let me tell you something, to me, the non-branded who are spending the whole day in the Mosque, actually they are lucky, they are pleasing Allah. On the other hand, the branded pilgrim, they are unfortunate living next to Mosque; Allah gave then less chance to visit Mosque because they became the victim of materialism. I think the non-branded pilgrims are more authentic than branded pilgrims.

And R16 simply observed:

> The question is whether to be branded or not to be branded; this is all a brands game, my son.

The data appear to suggest, therefore, that what now matters in the Hajj is which market a pilgrim belongs to. This then raises the question of how these two markets impact on the behaviour of the pilgrims; therefore, the next section focuses on the changing behaviour of the pilgrims owing to the existence of these branded and non-branded markets.

6.2.2.5 The changing behaviour of pilgrims: Branded and non-branded markets
As discussed in the previous sections, from the interviews it became evident that the majority of respondents acknowledged that the Hajj has become commodified (though many spoke in terms of costs or the Hajj becoming a business rather than using the term commodified). It also became evident that this commodification had resulted in the emergence of two distinctive markets of pilgrims – referred to here as the branded and non-branded markets. Subsequent questions during the interviews therefore sought to identify if and how the behaviour of pilgrims has been influenced or affected by this market dichotomy, although it should be noted that certain religious rulings have also impacted more generally on pilgrim behaviour. Broadly, responses to these questions revealed that, first, there is a general increase in interest in and demand for comfort and luxury and, second, that owing to the emergence of the branded market, some pilgrims' behaviour is becoming ostentatious, contradicting the Islamic lessons of Hajj.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was also revealed that owing to the distinction between the two markets, the evident distinction between rich and poor pilgrims has increased significantly, resulting in social, economic and moral discrimination.

In the interviews, participants who were performing the Hajj on an economy package (i.e. non-branded) were asked: if you were offered a star-rated Hajj package would you accept it? Many responded affirmatively. For example, R45 said:

> Of course, I mean, who would refuse it? The main reason is that 5-star hotels are all next to the Grand Mosque; it is more convenient for us. I am looking for all luxuries to perform an easy Hajj; we need to discover other experiences as well, we need the experience of 5-star hotel breaks, to live in good ambiance, so it is a dream to stay there where most of the rich people, businessmen are staying. So why not the chance for us?

Thus, for these pilgrims, a more luxurious (branded) package would render the Hajj a more pleasurable experience for them whilst, more generally, the arguably natural desire to experience greater luxury was also expressed by many. Moreover, the research also revealed that, generally, pilgrims purchasing a Hajj package are increasingly seeking greater levels of comfort and ease. Simply put, they are no longer willing to tolerate the simplicity and hardship traditionally associated with a pilgrimage. As one respondent (R52, a Hajj Tour operator) indicated:

> There are no limits to the wishes and demands of pilgrims and they are looking for this [luxury] when they approach us. I have sold Hajj packages to Islamic hardliners who do not like these comforts and luxuries but if you offer them by using some marketing tactics, even they will not refuse them.

From observations undertaken during the research, it became evident that those pilgrims staying in accommodation near to the Grand Mosque (i.e. branded pilgrims) quickly left the holy premises after prayers had concluded. That is, they were spending less time in the Grand Mosque (which arguably should be the main reason for the journey to Mecca); instead, air-conditioned rooms, lavish food and internet technologies in the hotel became the focal point for them. Only those (non-branded) pilgrims whose accommodation was far away remained in the Mosque; however, the interviews revealed if the non-branded pilgrims had the chance to stay the hotels next to the Grand Mosque, they would probably act similarly to the branded pilgrims. As R26 said:

Look, I give you an interesting example. We Muslims always say follow the 'Sunnah' of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) but, being Muslims, we are selective even while following Sunnah. If the 'Sunnah' is supporting my needs and requirements I will follow it; if not, I will find a loophole for it. For instance, at the time of sacrificing an animal in Mina, very few pilgrims want to slaughter an animal with their own hands and majority put money in the bank so they will have someone sacrifice for you. Everybody is looking for comfort; nobody wants to take the pain of the Hajj like our Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) had.

Furthermore, the data yielded by this study provide convincing evidence that the changing behaviour of pilgrims is not only because of the emergence of branded and non-branded markets but also results from the political/ power dimension of the commodification of religion. For instance, as previously noted, it has been observed that the Saudi government has endorsed a religious ruling (Fatwa) that all of Mecca should be considered as a part of Al-Haram (Grand Mosque). Therefore, pilgrims can offer prayers outside of the Grand Mosque; moreover, these prayers should be considered equal to the prayers in the Grand Mosque. However, although this ruling might reduce excessive pilgrim traffic at the prayer time, it may impact negatively on the pilgrim's spiritual behaviour. For instance, according to R1:

> Yes, these hotels are within the premises of Al-Haram now, and the Fatwa has been given by Saudi religious scholars that all Mecca hotels are the part of Al-Haram Mosque, so anybody can pray anywhere. But to me this is not correct, for then what is the purpose of coming to Mecca if you want to pray from your hotel room or glass mosque? No, this is not fair and against the Islamic values, very sad to say this happening now. I have stayed in the Fairmount Hotel [5-star] and believe me; the prayers you are offering in hotels are not having strong spiritual background. The house of Allah is in front of you and you are offering prayers from a hotel; it is a shame, you are here to increase the spiritual experience, not to decrease it. But now these hotels are the part of Haram, yes, maybe Allah will accept your prayers from the hotel as well but you are unfortunate that you are doing this deliberately just for the sake of comfort. We are there in search of spiritual tranquillity, not for worldly spirituality. Allah will never give you equal reward for the prayer you offered in the hotel rather than a prayer which you will offer in Grand Mosque Haram.

In a similar vein, R35 related the following experience:

> Look, I tell you my personal experience just two days ago that happened to me. One of my friend staying in Clock Tower Hotel [5-star], I went to see him at the prayer time. It was full rush everywhere, therefore, he said come upstairs and we perform prayers in the glass prayer room of hotel. I said ok, but when I tried to go inside the hotel the police stopped me and said you are not a resident of this hotel, therefore you can't go upstairs to perform prayer. Then I called my friend downstairs and we performed prayers in the shopping mall. Now, you can imagine how I felt at that time. I was socially, morally and economically discriminated, I told this to my friend, he was also surprised to know that. I felt first time that there is a difference between VIP Haji and normal Haji, who I am.

R17 also expressed the same view:

> Pilgrims who wanted to do shopping; they deliberately offer prayers inside the shopping malls as it is also the part of Haram premises declared by the Saudi government. Imagine a full luxury mall with lots of picture hanging there, and pilgrims are offering prayers then and there. We should try our best to pray inside the mosque. But only for the sake of shopping people look for comfort and pray deliberately in shopping malls rather to go inside the Grand Mosque. If you are late I can understand, but deliberately is not acceptable.

The above evidence validates the point raised by Olsen (2003) and Waitt (2000) that religious establishments not only constrain the range of explanations given at a religious place, but also can endorse certain explanations. Therefore, it could be argued that owing to the commodification of a religious event, governments can change or mould the religious views to facilitate the smooth running of the event. However, the consequential impact on the pilgrim's religious behaviour may be negative, as it may be argued that they will select the easiest path to achieve their goals, even at the cost of their spiritual experience. Certainly, the research revealed that non-branded pilgrims are also eager to join the branded-style luxury Haj; the great majority of the pilgrims in the research admitted that are looking for service, comfort and brand-oriented products, and for that they are willing to pay more.

Additionally, it was observed that as a result of the growth in the branded market, some pilgrims have become victims of ostentatious behaviour, which is against the lessons or Islamic values. For instance, R8 complained that:

Due to this commercialisation, the pilgrims are telling very proudly that we are doing 5-star Hajj. Now this is ostentatious behaviour, which Allah doesn't like at all.

Similarly:

I think yes, especially Bangladeshi people, when they go back home they tell people non-stop about hotel experience, shopping experience, and only in the end about the spiritual experience. (R10)

Look, this is true, a lot of people are doing the Hajj nowadays for showing others, and they are getting away from the Hajj concept. Look, to gain something you need to lose something, meaning there is a lot of modernisation here and believe me, this is the demand of current pilgrims. Even you offer a poor man 5-star Hajj luxuries they will not say yes. This is a materialist world; everybody is chasing their wishes, so therefore where there is rich there will be poor, where there is a lion their must a deer. I have read in the books since I was a kid that pilgrims are the 'guest of Allah' but now you are 'the guest of Saudi government' which is focusing on commercial factors in the Hajj. (R35)

According to Garuda (2010) when material products take over religious events, an environment is created where there is less connection with 'God' and more with contemporary commodities, and where pilgrims are obsessed by more material social needs than concentrating on religion. In this research, it was revealed that when the desire for material products increased among pilgrims an inferiority complex between pilgrims was created if that desire could not be satisfied, hence creating a vacuum between rich (branded) and poor (non-branded) pilgrims. For instance, R39 said:

Yes, it makes difference, but you see people from the developed world, they have their lifestyle, they can't live like us [non-branded] as we are currently living. But one more thing, if you are coming to Allah's house then one should sacrifice the lifestyle and live like an ordinary human with basic amenities. But money talks, even in Mecca. You and I can't stop it. It will be good if all pilgrims should live in one style of accommodation near the Kaaba so then you can omit the difference between rich and poor. But because high category pilgrims are paying more money, so they are enjoying everything; and we are paying less, so we have been thrown miles and miles away from here. Look, only Allah

knows, we are living far but spending more time in the Grand Mosque. The pilgrims who are living next to the Mosque, they are sleeping in their hotel rooms. This is a grace of Allah; who is right and wrong, only Allah knows.

R27 confirmed this viewpoint:

Yes, definitely, especially economically those who have money, they are having more opportunities and luxuries to stay and to live near the Mosque, those who has less money, they are deprived from these facilities, so the discrimination is automatically there. You are categorising pilgrims even in the premises of Al-Haram where everybody is supposed to equal but not now. Look, Prophet Mohammad said in the Hajj everybody is equal, perform a simple Hajj and do not show off to other. Unfortunately, this is hard to find now. The objective of the Hajj has changed now into a more economic perspective. I think the only thing left in the Hajj which everybody shares is white two-cloth sheets. Otherwise everywhere you are categorised according to your financial status.

And R36 summarised the problem:

It depends on individual religious acts, it doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, even poor can make mistakes like the rich. Being a rich pilgrim you are showing off, which is bad, but similarly being a poor pilgrim you can do something wrong… to have something, this is as bad as a rich pilgrim's act. Therefore, this commercialisation is having a different impact on individuals. But generally, for the sake of argument, yes, this commercialisation is actually nurturing a seed of difference among pilgrims.

During the research at the Hajj in 2016, both staggering poverty and extreme wealth and ostentation were observed in Mecca. On the one hand, for example, clustered masses of pilgrims from all over the world lay slumped on blankets on the floor of the courtyard outside the main Grand Mosque. They included mostly African pilgrims who lay asleep with all their belongings at the front door of the high-rise shopping mall and hotel just adjacent to the Grand Mosque. In some senses, Mecca has not actually changed as a place of refuge for the millions of pilgrims who flock there each year. On the other hand, the simple resting places of these poorer pilgrims lie in the long shadows cast by the looming clock tower and decadent hotels, which they could never afford, surrounding the Grand Mosque (see Figure 6.2). Certainly, the Hajj is a spiritual pilgrimage that every financially and physically able Muslim is required to carry out at

least once in their lifetime, and yet Islam's holiest city has undergone extraordinary transformation that panders to the interests of the Saudi tourism and hospitality sector, seemingly above the spiritual needs of the many. This means that what is typically regarded as an unostentatious journey aimed at humbling the human soul has become a top-tier 'experience' destination for some, at least those who can afford it. Therefore, another question addressed by the research is: what message Mecca is delivering following the commodification of the city?

Figure 6.2: Economy class pilgrims taking refuge under the luxury hotels in shopping malls

Photo: The Author

6.2.2.6 The Contemporary (commodified) City of Mecca

It is widely claimed in the literature that religious destinations have generally become the hub of economic activity (Choen, 1998; Hung et al., 2017; Olsen, 2003, 2011, 2016; Sharpley, 2009; Singh, 2006; Sizer, 1999; Timothy, 2006; Vukonic, 1996). More specifically, some claim that the presence and availability of contemporary branded products in religious destinations promotes issues such as the commodification of religion, a reduction in authenticity and the weakening of spiritual experiences and values (Vukonic, 2002; Zaidman, 2003). Hence as, Manivannan (2015) argues, 'Once a destination is sold as a tourism product, and the tourism demand for souvenirs, arts,

entertainment and other commodities begins to exert influence, basic changes in human values may occur. Sacred sites and objects may not be respected when they are perceived as goods to trade'.

A similar process was revealed by the research as occurring in Mecca. For example, R17 stated:

> Look I know where you are coming from; I have also heard academics have started calling it Mecca Hatten or Mecca Vegas, which is true to a certain extent. The city becomes too much elaborated; to a certain measure they are taking away the focus of the pilgrim and from the Haram as well. You are correct, the message is wrong. It has become much Westernised and industrialised. I do understand the requirement of rooms but it has become very elaborate, like Vegas and Manhattan in New York.

Other respondent comments included:

> Well, we shouldn't call Mecca a city like Vegas, but it is true, it is like Western city of the Middle East. (R50)

> I want to share my personal experience here with you, please. I tell you what I saw, a person in the Al-Haram who was facing towards the Fairmount Clock Tower Hotel and offering Dua, with the Kaaba at his back. I try to stop this guy and told him, are you ok, this is Kaaba, you should face towards it. (R8)

The evidence seems to suggest that mega construction within the hospitality and tourism sector in Mecca is transforming the pilgrimage into a touristic destination experience. Previously, the pilgrimage was known for its simple rite of passage, but now constructions have cast a shadow over it. Most pilgrims can't afford the experience, and the pilgrimage is challenging for some people as they pray in the wrong direction. The reason is that they cannot see the Mosque and do not know which way the Mosque is, and some thought that hotels are mosques or some kind of a shrine.

6.2.2.7 The concept of luxury Hajj in Islam

Close analysis of the data from the interviews revealed that majority of respondents believed that participating in a luxury Hajj is against Hajj and Islamic values. Nevertheless, some (branded) pilgrims claimed in the interviews that Allah had blessed them with money so this is the time to spend money in the name of Allah.

Criticising this argument, R23 said:

> How can I say it is allowed…. Islam is the name of simplicity, charity, sharing, justice, equality. It is not a religion to show off, it is a religion of peace and respect. Islam is a name of moderation, balance doesn't like extremes; now can you evaluate yourself that doing the Hajj in luxury is against Islamic values or not? I know personally people here in Mecca who do not come for the prayer but give preference to their comfort, and this trend will continue due to commercialisation in Mecca, as commercialisation has penetrated the veins of pilgrims and pushed them to act like tourists. And also after watching the laser show at the Fairmount Hotel last night in front of the Kaaba [see Figure 6.3], I felt that I am on holiday somewhere in the Western destination.

More succinctly, R45 claimed that:

> Muslims are losing Islamic values because they have less or no knowledge of Islam and become the victim of Americanisation.

The above responses support the argument that, although pilgrims might have left the skyscrapers of London or New York or the hustle and bustle of Kuala Lumpur or Jakarta behind them to escape materialism and find Allah in simplicity, the commodification of Mecca, is ironically transforming the simple, spartan rite of passage of the traditional Hajj into a business, with over-loaded malls and exaggerated hotels. The high rise complexes and luxury hotels challenge the traditional Hajj values for wealthy pilgrims, while poorer pilgrims find it increasingly difficult to afford lodgings. Over-consumerism during the Hajj season arguably acts as a distraction from prayer, reflection and the enhancement the values of brotherhood and solidarity by spending time with fellow Muslims from across the world.

Figure 6.3: Laser Show, Fairmont Hotel, Mecca

Photo: The Author

6.2.2.8 Commodification and Hajj lessons (equality, simplicity and no ostentation)

When asked about the message or lessons inherent in Hajj participation, most interviewees acknowledged that, from a theological perspective, everyone is equal in the Hajj that simplicity is the key and that pilgrims should attempt to avoid any ostentatious behaviour. However, further probing during the interviews revealed that there is growing support for the claim that the principles of equality, simplicity and no ostentatious displays are in jeopardy owing to the commodification of Mecca and the Hajj. Opinions on the extent of the challenge to these principles varied amongst individual respondents although many suggested that 'equality' in the Hajj must now be seen from a broader perspective. Specifically, following the government's declaration that all of Mecca should be considered an extension of the Grand Mosque, then equality must now also be considered in that context, not just within the Grand Mosque itself. However, from the preceding discussion, it is evident that such equality does not exist, not least because of the segregation between different Hajj packages, whilst the issue was further elaborated on by R26:

> If you take equality, no, we are not equal in this area, not at all. But when you go inside the Mosque Al- Haram, there we are sometime equal. When VIP people come to perform Umrah and the Hajj they will receive special protocols

in Mosque, which is against Islamic values. For instance, if any Prime Minister of the world came there or the King of Saudi Arabia, they open the doors of the Kaaba for them so they can go inside; here, the equality is challenged as Allah said: in my mosque there is no King, no beggar, no white, no black. But basically is this happening now? No.

Now when we went to Arafat, we were not equal either, due to the categorisation of pilgrims by luxuries and nationalities. This is similarly happening in the field of Mina, we were segregated as per our nationalities and Hajj packages, so we are not equal there either. Let's talk about the field of Muzdilfah; there we are not only segregated by our nationalities but also partially by Hajj packages. So basically, the equality in the Hajj is challenged not from Allah; it is man-made because the Hajj is a business.

The participant raised an interesting point in that even in the field of Arafat, which is one of the main elements of the Hajj pilgrimage journey; pilgrims are divided according to their Hajj packages. Indeed, during the research, it was observed that the branded pilgrims' tents were highly decorated and equipped with air-conditioning; moreover, their eating areas (offering lavish food) in the field of Arafat were secured by a steel wire wall so that other pilgrims from economy class could not get access (see Figure 6.4). Similarly, it was observed that the Arafat branded tent area presented a scene of a picnic spot, where branded pilgrims were gossiping and enjoying the food, yet still criticising the luxuries and comforts of Hajj they were enjoying (see Figure 6.5).

A similar scene was observed at the tent city of Mina, where millions of pilgrims were segregated according to their financial status and facilities. Up-market pilgrims could spend nights at Mina with almost every facility on offer, including a private small tent for family, open buffets, refrigerators, computers, Internet and so on. It all depends on how much you pay (see Figure 6.6). Pilgrims could, in the past, lay claim to some hardship, sleeping in basic tents or in the open air, cooking their own meals and carrying water but no such thing exists at Mina there anymore. Services are divided into six grades, from VIP to ordinary; standard tents have electricity, air-coolers and nearby toilets. VIP tents are hired out to families and groups at a high cost. Additional facilities include television, mobile telephones and beds, all of five-star quality. The

Figure 6.4: A barricade separates 5-Star pilgrims from economy class at Arafat

Photo: Author

Figure 6.5: Scene of 5-Star Luxury Premises at Arafat

Photo: Author

Figure 6.6: Pilgrims in star-rated tent at Mina

Photo: Author

food for pilgrims using the tents is supplied by five-star hotels. In the lower grades, however, a 20 meter (66 feet) by 10 meter (33 feet) tent accommodates up to 50 pilgrims, all sleeping on mattresses on the ground. However, they still have access to showers, three meals of packed food daily, and a constant supply of drinks.

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents referred to one element of the Hajj where equality remains: the dress code of pilgrim called 'Ihram'. They also reaffirmed, in one way or another, the significance of Ihram. First, the white colour represents purity, piousness and cleanliness. The religion of Islam spreads the message of outer and inner cleanliness, purity and simplicity. In this sense, the dress code for the Hajj truly portrays the spirit of Islam. The importance of Ihram can be understood by the fact that if Ihram gets dirty, or liquid scent is used on it, it has to be replaced with a new Ihram to continue the process of Hajj. If it is not replaced, then the Hajj becomes invalid. The respondents emphasised that Ihram does not exhibit the financial status of the people participating in the Hajj; all wear the same dress. In this way, people feel more comfortable and equal among the others without any inferiority or superiority complex. Interestingly, however, it was observed that even Ihram is now available in different designs and fabrics, and has become a popular fashion commodity among designers.

With regards to sustaining the simplicity in Hajj, the interviews elicited a mixture of responses, although the general sense was that the element of simplicity had disappeared. For example, some suggested that there was a time when people would spend months preparing themselves financially and spiritually to live the real meaning of the Hajj whereas nowadays, the Hajj is offered as a holiday package. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, many Hajj agencies around the world offer value packages with super programs, deluxe programs and short executive program (see Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7: A pilgrim promoting a 'Super Hajj' tour package during the Hajj

Photo: Author

These programs offer the best in Mecca and Madinah, the best available food and the best possible location. Yet, when the Prophet performed his one Hajj, the only provisions he had with him was worth of no more than four Dirham, as narrated in several books of Hadith. The Hajj was meant to teach the pilgrims equality and perseverance for higher causes, yet it has been turned into an exercise in convenience. Moreover, the Hajj is rapidly adopting social elements that distinguish the rich from the poor, the very institution that it is supposed to prevent. Divisions among pilgrims on the basis of their ethnicity and money are visible throughout the Hajj journey.

Regarding the traditional requirement of simplicity, R13 said:

Yes, simplicity has almost vanished as our faith and spirituality is getting weaker. Equality is also at stake as I said we are classified now; look, in the premises of Haram we are classified. The Haji is looking for comfort and relaxation now, only because to the involvement of money in the pilgrimage journey. Money can buy anything, even the pain of the hardship of the Hajj. This is wrong, shouldn't be like this.

R16 explained in more detail:

Very good question, you are absolutely correct. These three elements are diminished due to commercialisation. Let's take simplicity; actually the essence or the meaning of the Hajj is that one should break from routine life activities, cut your-self from the world. But here you are enjoying luxuries and you can't see the poor pilgrim who came from Africa or Asia at all because you have the layers of money on your eyes. No, this is not the way, come and face hardships of the Hajj, do not sit in your five-star air-conditioned hotels. I am not asking people to come down and sit on the camel; that time was gone. But Islam is teaching patience and simplicity. There are two extremes in bearing hardships, one extreme is camel which I am not asking you to do, but another extreme is which you made yourself stay in luxury. Mainly it is your interpretation of Islam, which is wrong, you keep asking facilities luxuries, asking for 30 types of food, luxury tents in Mina and Arafat, luxury hotels in Madinah, and you are thinking the meaning of Hajj is only circumambulation. No not at all.

Conversely, others argued that simplicity should be in your heart; it has got nothing to do with luxury amenities of the Hajj. Those pilgrims who are performing a luxury Hajj are not contradicting Islamic values. It is Allah who gave them financial power to perform a comfortable Hajj. As R1 said:

Absolutely I believe this. Simplicity is very important, but that doesn't mean the comfort I am having in my hotel is jeopardising simplicity or other elements, because the worship I am going to do here requires comfort as well. if I am not fresh I am not able to perform them in a good manner.

Look, now disposable income has increased and pilgrims are coming here in millions, and their needs and requirements have changed as well. They are looking for a more comfortable Hajj. The people who are doing the Hajj on roads or in low level hotels, possibly they do not have enough money to afford

more, so from Islamic perspective the Hajj is not mandatory for them, they
shouldn't come.

From the interviews, then it is evident there is a diversity of views on wealth and
luxuries amongst pilgrims on the Hajj. On the one hand, those pilgrims who can afford
high quality services consider it the blessing of Allah, arguably moulding and twisting
the meaning of simplicity of the Hajj; on the other hand, those pilgrims who cannot
afford them believe it is against the essence of Hajj. Nevertheless, there was
consensus amongst the interview participants that that the language of pilgrims has
been changed. Whereas once they sharing their Hajj experiences, now they share their
hotel and Hajj package experiences with pride.

Similarly, there was consensus among respondents that ostentatious behaviour is
increasingly evident amongst among pilgrims. In this regard, the increasing use of
SMART Media Technologies (SMT) was a bone of contention as a particular means of
ostentatious behaviour on the Hajj. Indeed, some respondents referred to smartphones
as the 'Fourth devil in Hajj'. From observations, it became clear that Hajj Apps free
WIFI services in the Grand Mosque, and the availability of dedicated social media
websites were facilitating and enhancing pilgrims' social rather than spiritual
experience of the Hajj. In fact, it is evident that, since the Hajj has become 'high-tech',
the nature of the pilgrims' experience is being challenged, its fundamental spirituality
being transformed it into something more akin to a 'cyber experience', an experience
which competes with and jeopardies the principles of the Islamic religious journey of
the Hajj with its focus on worship without ostentatiousness (see Figures 6.8 – 6.11).

Figure 6.8: Taking selfies during circumambulation

Photo: Author
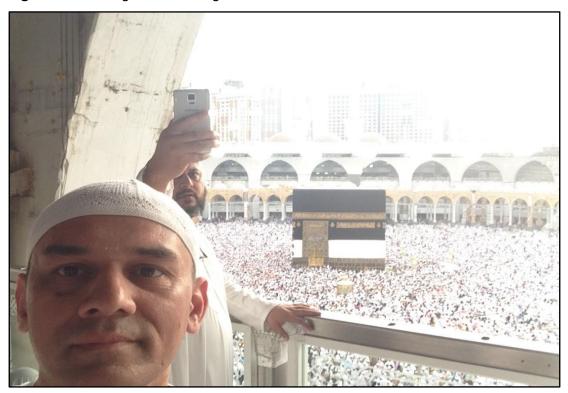
Figure 6.9: SMART phone charging facility in the Grand Mosque

Photo: Author

Figure 6.10: Pilgrims busy with SMART phones in the Grand Mosq**ue**

Photo: Author

Figure 6.11: Pilgrims buying mobile phones and SIM cards, Mecca

Photo: Author

Moreover, observations also revealed that some of those pilgrims who criticised the use of smartphones were also using them, but denying it. Specifically, there was much evidence of people taking 'selfies' or videos of themselves in different places and

rituals in the Hajj. These pictures or videos were then uploaded onto social media websites so that colleagues, friends, relatives and family can see them and send 'likes' and 'dislikes'. Thus, in comparison to earlier times, when a pilgrim returned from the Hajj and spoke about his experiences and, perhaps, received admiration and praise, pilgrims now send videos and pictures hour by hour, minute by minute, to the extent that it is denigrating the Hajj experience. For instance, pilgrims were observed coming to sacred sites and extending their hands in the position of a person making Du'a (supplication), then having a picture taken, after which they lowered their hands. This could be interpreted that the hands were raised not for the sake of Allah, but for the photograph to post on social media.

Generally, then, the use of mobile technology was considered to be diluting the spiritual experience. As R8 explained:

> Look, before visiting these two holy mosques I have already received hundreds of pictures of them on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and selfies, so when I saw these mosques, literally, I didn't feel emotional or highly spiritually charged because I already felt them on my gadgets. I am really disappointed that pilgrims are busy in making movies here, taking selfies, chatting with the external world by using different SMT platforms and gadgets. They are concentrating less on the spiritual aspect of the journey; it is more like fun nowadays or holidays. This is like a frustration now, I came here to find spiritual tranquillity but the majority of pilgrims are busy here with SMART technologies, may Allah all might bless us and forgive us. The selfie culture which is considered to be like devil's act and now looks like a part of worship, Hajis are switching to ostentatious behaviour, they are busy showing their relatives, friends, families each and every move of their journey. I want to tell you more if you allow me? I saw lots of pilgrims, they are not reciting 'Talbiyah' [Muslim prayer invoked by the pilgrims as a conviction that they intend to perform the Hajj only for the glory of Allah] by themselves, and they switched on their SMART phones to do so… Imagine the 'Talbiyah', which should come out from our hearts, coming from the machine. About the Hajj App, yes, I download it but haven't used it, but my friends are using it. This is a shame that now a machine is guiding us how to perform Hajj; it should be our religious duty to have this knowledge how to perform Hajj.

The above evidence suggests that the presence of contemporary commodities, particularly SMT, is impacting negatively on the religious experience of pilgrims. Yet, it

could be argued that the incursion of SMT into the lives of pilgrims and the holy destination of Mecca is unstoppable as technology not only penetrates the foundations of pilgrim's routine lives but has also become an economic magnet for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Hence, new technologies will continue to influence the lives of pilgrims, to transform religious destinations and to transform the traditional spiritual experiences of pilgrims. Hence, it is perhaps necessary to re-assess the experience of the Hajj in the 21st Century and to recognise the phenomenon of pilgrims bringing their own interpretation of a commodified experience through the use of SMT to the Hajj.

6.2.2.9 Commodified images of Mecca

The modernisation of Mecca is discussed widely in the literature (Jafari & Scott, 2010; Rizat, 2010; Salman, 2011); during the interviews, it became apparent that many of the respondents were surprised at or even confused with the extent of the modern architectural design of the contemporary hospitality and tourism infrastructure in Mecca. Moreover, at the same time, they criticised this modernisation, many of them believing that the modern infrastructure was polluting the divine environment of the Grand Mosque. In addition, many drew attention to the fact all the 5-star hotels adjacent to the Kaaba tower over it. They suggested that whilst the Mosque conveys a message of peace, the hotels convey a message of 'Fitnah' (unrest or rebellion) and the Westernisation of Mecca, challenging its historical infrastructural authenticity. Those pilgrims who had performed the Hajj twenty years ago or more observed that, at that time, there were no skyscrapers in Mecca and, most importantly, the Grand Mosque's minarets were visible from a distance. Now, they cannot be seen because of the hotels. Consequently, this modernisation of Mecca is impacting on the experience of the pilgrim, as indicated by those interviewed. For example, according to R46:

> On our way on the bus from Madinah to Mecca, we were only ten pilgrims out of sixty who were saying, where is AL-Haram [Grand Mosque], find the minarets of AL-Haram, we were excited to see them. But other group members were saying, where Mecca Clock Tower hotel is and, when they saw it, they said wow. Everybody forgot Allah's house because that building is so attractive and glittery; even from twenty-five kilometres it is visible. Now the hotels have taken over the minarets of Grand Mosque, so you can imagine the level of spiritual experience here. We were all almost tourists, including my wife. Just imagine the building which was made only couple of years ago is more precious today than the house of Allah, what a shame.

Similarly, R45 said:

My elder told me, first we will see the minarets of Grand Mosque, but now they are not visible, the towers took over them. When I saw towers, I said wow; it was a gigantic building visible from far away, easily bigger than Big Ben. I like that building, but when I spend few days in Mecca I have started hating it because it is taller than the mosque and every night they do their laser show which is like any tourist place. This is against Islamic values, and the temple at the top is like a woman; yes, also the building looks like a woman, like a female standing, this is one of my observations. Whoever designed it is funny.

Another respondent (R34) stated:

It is absolutely beyond my expectation. I was thinking it is like a normal city but when I saw it the first time I said to my wife; this like Europe or sometimes I am walking in the streets of New York. Look at the cars here, all mostly American brands like GMC. The hotels are mostly a mix of European and American brands, my perceptions were completely wrong. I know lot of construction is going on but I didn't know the scale and scope of it.

Similarly, R49:

Now it is like a Western city, more materialistic, but I am not impressed. Mecca becomes the hub of business for domestic and international investors. Before coming here I was thinking, yes, Mecca is a modern city, but when I saw it I can't express it to you, this is the peak of modernism, the hotel we are currently sitting in, when you enter in this hotel there is a shopping mall and you see all the ladies have no veil or partially veiled. Females have changed a lot, there was a time when females can't go outside their house without a man; now these females are working in the shops and in the hotels, sometimes without veil, also wearing English dresses. I am talking about all the females, including Saudi girls. You can't figure out that this is a spiritual city; you won't even feel the spiritual environment of the Hajj in these hotels and malls. At the time of azan, pray wherever you stand and then start shopping. This is not Haram; what type of Haram are we building? What message we are giving to the world?

It could be argued from the above responses of participants that Mecca which once a dusty desert town struggling to cope with the ever-increasing number of pilgrims

arriving for the annual Hajj, the city now soars above its surroundings with a glittering array of skyscrapers, shopping malls and luxury hotels (see Figure 6.12 to 6.14).
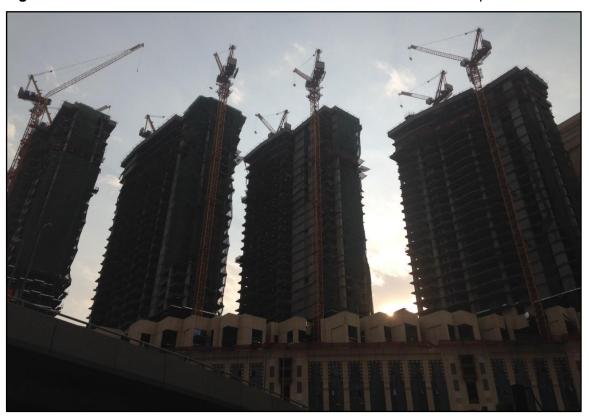
Figure 6.12: Contemporary Mecca

Photo: Author

Figure 6.13: Hotels next to the Grand Mosque

Photo: Author

Figure 6.14: Hotels and malls under construction next to the Grand Mosque

Photo: Author

The holy city is now offering unmatched westernised exclusive luxury hotel and skyscraper commodified experiences where the pilgrims have the privilege of choosing their rooms, showcasing unrivalled views of either the Kaaba, Haram or to the Holy City of Mecca, and having the opportunity to go shopping fin the branded malls But simultaneously, these developments compete with the dignity and prestige of the Grand Mosque. Some participants claimed that the skyscrapers give the impression of a quick trip to the Docklands in London. They pointed out that they had not come to Mecca to be see another city of tall buildings, such as Las Vegas or New York. These pilgrims found find no or limited spirituality in the city. For them, the spirituality of the pilgrimage is being ruined by skyscrapers and availability of materialistic amenities around the holy site which give the impression that Mecca is now a tourist city and that pilgrims are tourists (see Figures 6.15 and 6.16).

Figure 6.15: Grand Mecca Mall

Photo: Author

Figure 6.16: Western-branded commodities in Mecca Mall

Photo: Author

6.2.2.10 Commodification and the Hajj of the Prophet

A further issue related to commodification emerging from the interviews was the extent to which contemporary pilgrims follow the traditional Hajj rites as at the time of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Some respondents suggested that these rites are still observed although the majority of comments supported the general view that, nowadays, very few pilgrims follow the acts, actions and lessons of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) during the Hajj, mostly reflecting material needs. For instance, one respondent (R35) observed that:

> Prophet Mohammad sometimes did not have food to eat and Sahba copied him, he had tattered clothes, similarly Shaba copy him. There were rich Sahba at that time performing Hajj with the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) but they never showed their money and were with Prophet all the time and followed his acts. Look, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) could have asked for those luxuries at any time, he just needed to request Allah and he would send help to him. But why Mohammad (PBUH) didn't do that? Because he wants to leave the example of Umah that Hajj is the name of simplicity, equality and no

ostentatious behaviour. But, nowadays we can't even think or dream like that, therefore we become materialistic.

Similarly, R40 said:

> Mulana ya slamt-Ul Allah Islam wrote in his book 'my hard work is that I want to take Mecca and Madinah back to the era of Prophet Mohammad' (PBUH)…If you want your Hajj to be accepted than take care of four things: ears, eyes and mouth and help poor pilgrims. But what's happening now, people are fighting for the food despite having lavish menus, pushing each other during rites, not respecting females, and some females are performing the Hajj without Mahram, it is prohibited in Islam. So yes, in a deeper sense the way our prophet performed Hajj, we are not even near to it.

These comments indicate that the simple ritual of the Prophet (PBUH) and the divine pillar of Islam (Hajj) have become the victim of the contemporary commodified world, which has weakened the acts/actions of the Prophets among his followers during the Hajj. In other words, it would appear that the Hajj, where the pilgrims are expected to follow the exemplary path of Prophets, has now in a sense become a religious battlefield of comfort and financial profit occupied by materialistic pilgrims.

6.2.2.11 The commodified future of the Hajj and Pilgrims

A final issue to emerge from the interviews under the theme of commodification was the future character of the Hajj and pilgrims. On the one hand, there was consensus that the Hajj would continue for ever; on the other hand, however, a number of respondents expressed the view that, as time passes, more modern products will be introduced into the Hajj market, not only to facilitate but to provide more comfort and luxury to pilgrims. More specifically, some suggested that increasing use of technology and further developments in the hospitality and tourism sector will attract greater numbers of pilgrims to the Hajj, but with weaker faith. Consequently, the ritual may become, for many, more a form of religious-themed tourism, with no place for the poor pilgrims as the Hajj becomes an increasingly expensive product of Islam.

According to R21:

> Brother, the way the world is changing, anything could happen. The Hajj will go on, never ever stop, but yes, the behaviours and experiences will be totally changed. It has changed now actually, it looks like people are having religious

holidays, very few people are looking serious in worship but basically almost everybody (rich or poor pilgrim) is discussing politics, Hajj packages, SMART Technologies and other matters while sitting inside Allah house. It depends also on your religious knowledge, which is tremendously decreasing among Muslims.

Overall, then, the research revealed that not only is the commodification of Mecca and the Hajj acknowledged by those interviewed, although they tended to refer to 'commodification' in terms of the increasing commercialisation, marketing, packaging and expense of the Hajj, but also many expressed their concerns about the ways in which this commodification was impacting on pilgrims' behaviour and experiences. As the preceding discussion has demonstrated, a variety of factors, from the formalisation of Hajj participation into organised group tours (and the subsequent inevitable creation of differently rated and priced packages), the modernisation and expansion of tourism and hospitality infrastructure in Mecca and the increasing availability and use of Smart technology to the general 'touristification' of the Hajj, are having a number of significant consequences. These include the segregation of pilgrims (described here as branded and non-branded), transformations in pilgrims' behaviours and, according to some, a dilution of the significance of Hajj as it becomes dominated by the demands of ease and comfort. Nevertheless, as the following section now considers, a third general theme evident in the data generated by the interviews was that of authenticity and the extent to which, irrespective of (or perhaps because of) the commodification process, Mecca and the Hajj remain, from the perception of the respondents, authentic.

6.2.3 Authenticity of Mecca and the Hajj (Theme Three)

As noted above, a third dominant emerging from the interviews was that of authenticity. Within the literature and as reviewed in Chapter Three in this thesis, it is suggested generally that the increasing commodification of religious places and religious rituals may impact negatively on their authenticity and, hence, on the spiritual experience of religious tourists or pilgrims (Cohen, 1988; Olsen, 2003, 2006). At the same time, however, there is significant debate about how tourists in general perceive authenticity; in comparison to MacCannells's (1989) argument that tourists seek but inevitably fail to find or experience authenticity, it is suggested that authenticity is, in effect, 'negotiated' between the tourist and the place, event or experience. Essentially, authenticity is a dynamic, existential (Wang, 1999) concept reflecting the context and the individual tourist's values, experience, knowledge, perceptions and expectations (Pearce & Moscardo, 1986; Wang, 1999).

Confirming this argument, in this research the perceived authenticity of Mecca and the Hajj as forms of cultural heritage was found to be similarly fluid, being connected to the values of individual pilgrims, their experience and their religious background. Moreover, respondents were able to view the authenticity of Mecca and the Hajj from varying perspectives. Mecca as a holy destination of pilgrimage and the Hajj as one of the pillars of Islam are both subjectively (Islamic Ideology) and objectively (location) authentic. Generally, however, during the interviews it became evident that, with the contemporary commodification and development of Mecca and the wealth of tourism commodities that have become available, that subjective and objective authenticity of the holy place and ritual is being. Simply stated, the data provide convincing evidence that, in the view of the interviewees, the authenticity of Mecca and the Hajj is in jeopardy as a result of commodification. Thus, although there was consensus that the ideology of the Hajj remains authentic, the existence of contemporary tangible touristic commodities, such as modern star-rated hotels, luxury facilities and, in particular, the continuing demolition of the built (authentic) religious cultural heritage of Mecca is challenging the authenticity of the spiritual objectives of the Hajj, of the subjective and existential authentic experience of pilgrims and of the holy destination itself. The following subsections discuss specific themes related to authenticity emerging from the interviews.

6.2.3.1 Pilgrims' perceptions of the authenticity of Mecca and the Hajj

With regards to the tangible, objective authenticity of Mecca, unsurprisingly respondents suggested that historically (twenty to twenty-five years ago) the city was more authentic than it is now both in terms of physical structures and in terms of the Hajj. Participants commented that then, people were simple and much more helpful to each other, whilst the Hajj and related products were not expensive. According to R12:

> Not like today, it is like holiday. There were no 5 star concepts, hotels and houses were simple, neat and clean, rooms to sleep in only and the rest of the day pilgrims spent in the Mosques. But today's Haji is watching TV in the room and thinking, no need to go outside it is very hot, so pray inside the hotel.

Specifically, many commented that Mecca is like a concrete city; it is now difficult to negotiate the streets of Mohammad's city owing to modern infrastructure; even understanding the layout of the Grand Mosque is a challenge for some pilgrims due to its new size (see Figure 6.17). The general opinion amongst respondents was that the Mecca of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) has vanished in the 'modern era' in which pilgrims' comfort and other worldly amenities are more important than worship. It

appeared to them that what is emerging is a modern Islamic society, creating a modern Mecca where the hotel towers rather than the minarets of the Grand Mosque symbolising the city. As R5 noted succinctly, 'Mecca city, I would say this is western cosmetic city now'.

Respondents also referred the intense economic activity occurring in the city which is challenging not only the tangible but also the intangible aspects of the destination and the ritual of the Hajj. In particular, some considered that the vision of the authorities is not only to enhance the role of Mecca as the de facto spiritual capital of the Muslim world but also to enhance its capacity to become a regional commercial, trading and financial hub more generally, beyond the Muslim world. The consequences of this were described by R44:

Figure 6.17: Model of extension of the Grand Mosque

Photo: Author

> in Arafat, you remember, we thought that we are somewhere in a picnic spot area, we couldn't see Jabal-Noor or Rahmat, we couldn't see Mosque Nimra, but we had lush green grass with the beautiful fountains, air-conditioning installed in the gardens, red carpet reception with free dates and a cup of coffee, that was the scene of our Arafat part. The original Mecca city is buried a long time ago, the desert turned in to lush green grass and trees which is good, but big designer-style buildings, everybody holding a SMART gadget,

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everywhere is the most expensive cars of the world. Mecca city is promoting now a VIP culture; if there will no Kaaba in this city, the Saudis will certainly take this city onto the international platform to compete with other competitive tourism destinations, like Jeddah as tourist international city. Look, currently we are sitting in the Mecca Clock Tower Hotel. The government give Fatwa that this is the premises of the Al-Haram. You know very well, brother, on this residents' floor only a few or no pilgrims are staying here; this is VIP residence and you know very well what's happening in these rooms. Therefore, this is inauthentic Al-Haram; the authentic Al-Haram is only the Grand mosque. I feel guilty about what's happening in Mecca.

A number of participants claimed that only the Kaaba and the ground floor of the Grand Mosque can now be considered authentic, arguing that when they were performing the ritual of Sa'ee (see Chapter Four) they were not feeling spiritual as historic mountains of Al-Safa and Al-Marwa had been destroyed; even what was left for commemoration was claimed to be a replica. As R46 summarised:

> By name Mecca is authentic yes, but modern buildings are the authentic material and language of Mecca now.

6.2.3.2 Islamic sects' perception regarding Mecca's heritage as authenticity
Reflecting the argument in the literature that authenticity is 'negotiated', the research revealed differing perceptions of the impacts of commodification on the authenticity of Mecca For example, interview participants belonging to the 'Hanfi' sect of Islam related the authenticity of Mecca and the Hajj to the city's religious cultural heritage; specifically, they considered the city's built cultural heritage to be a fundamental part of Mecca and the Hajj and, consequently, criticised the Saudi government's commodification strategies for the destruction of the religious cultural heritage in the country's holy cities. Conversely, however, those respondents belonging to the Wahhabi / Salafi sects opposed the notion of heritage and its existence in Mecca and the Hajj, arguing that built heritage has nothing to do with the authenticity of Mecca and the Hajj as it is valueless and simply a means of encouraging the act of Bid'ah amongst pilgrims (see Chapter 4).

More specifically, participants from the Hanfi school of thought described the state-sponsored strain of Islam, Wahhabism, as a hard line, conformist theology that has encouraged the destruction of much of the authentic religious cultural heritage sites in Mecca and Madinah. Furthermore, they believed the holy cities were being expanded

to meet the growing demand of pilgrims to participate in the Hajj and Umrah, though, identifying two forms of expansion, one for the prayers in Grand Mosque and the other to accommodate pilgrims. However, they were critical of expansion for commercial purposes commercialisation although some were ambivalent, recognising development and expansion was necessary, but not ate cost the cities' heritage. Indeed, they suggested that the views of all Islamic sects should be considered. As

R11 remarked:

> Which heritage you are talking about? There is nothing left in both Holy cities, it all history now. Heritage is very important; without heritage you lose the environment of authenticity. If there is nothing authentic, you can't feel something, to feel something you should preserve the authenticity of the place, ritual. If you change the environment, look at this, it is highly modern environment, thanks to Allah that Kaaba is almost in an old form almost but exactly, this is blessing but please do not ignore religious cultural heritage, actually heritage is the evidence of authenticity.

R15 similarly sated:

> Look, heritage is an interpretation of the Quran and religious books. What we read, then we can see that, but when you read and when you go Mecca to see, it was heart breaking nothing is there. Therefore, heritage is like an evidence of the history, no heritage no authenticity.

Others added to this argument:

> Look, why were the Prophet's and Sahba houses demolished so you can't see tangible authentic history. If those houses are present today these 5-star pilgrims will die with shame when they compare their living style with the living of our great prophets. Heritage always taught you a lesson of truth, but bitter, and nowadays Muslims only like materialism. You can learn future strategies from the past but unfortunately this is happening in opposite manner. (R23)

> The Wahhabi's, they do not want to keep heritage, they thought it is Bid'ah. Yesterday I went to see the place where historic Islamic 'Hudabia Pact' took place. It's not in their real form or actually knocked down, I feel bad about it.

Now there are only stones, actually that building was a symbol of political Islamic history. (R25)

There is nothing left in Mecca. We came from far away, not only to do Hajj but also we are keen to see the living styles of our Prophets and Sahba. Authentic heritage is very important; it is a bridge between past and present. What we read in books we want to see as well, but nothing left here. Our future generation which is already weak in Islamic knowledge, when they will come here after ten years, there is nothing left for them at all except do the circumambulation and stay in 7-star hotel and go back. (R27)

Mecca was actually the hub of genuine Islamic heritage and now it is a hub of skyscrapers. The heritage means people from the past, of the present, for the future. Look, in my country we have the pyramids and other Farhan heritage, Prophet Moses (PBUH) heritage; we didn't demolish it on the name of Bid'ah. What a pity, I am really sorry for Mecca, it is now under the threat of modern civilisation. If the trend goes on then one day you will find Mecca only in the books. (R35)

Clearly, then, many respondents had strong opinions about the visible destruction of Mecca's heritage and its impact on the authenticity of the city. Conversely, however, participants from Wahhabi school of thought argued that the religious cultural heritage buildings have nothing to do with the authenticity of the Hajj and Mecca; rather, such buildings are seen as a means of generating sins. These respondents criticised the Hanfi pilgrims who thought that sacred buildings, mountains, shrines, and old houses of Prophets are the authentic heritage of Mecca for having no knowledge of Islam. According to Wahhabi beliefs, the only heritage building required in Mecca and for the Hajj is the Kaaba; more it is believed that the authentic interpretation of Islam lies only in Wahhabism and that this is the authentic path. Specifically, built heritage diminishes Islamic values, taking back to the time of idolatry. Therefore, for Wahhabis, heritage has nothing to do with the authenticity of the Mecca and Hajj.

As R19 explained:

Look, this heritage won't affect our pilgrimage journey, therefore no need to talk about it. We are doing Hajj as we have been told. OK, I can understand, the Prophet's house, they turned in to library, but we have to move forward and these places are not having any spiritual values. First of all, why we come here,

this is the question. Simply for fulfilling religious needs. We are not here to enjoy the history. Allah said in Quran there are two types of verses; one is (Mutashabihat), the second (Muhkamat). The former you can make sense of, and latter you can't, only Allah knows the true meaning of it. So some of the verses can be purely and correctly perfectly understood by humans, so as a believer prime, thing is to come here and perform my ritual here according to Sunnah, not according to authentic heritage.

Similarly, according to R9:

Look, Islam never ordered us to do that, our spirituality and authenticity lies only in the Grand Mosques. If we take care of heritage, then these two holy Mosques expansions are not possible. Look, I know the place we are currently sitting, it is quite possible that we are sitting in someone's house which was knocked down, OK, I remove this carpet and show you the three wells of Sahba (Talha) which came inside the expansion of Mosque and their garden but they gift everything to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and for Muslims. Take a photo of these wells, OK. Now, if we keep the heritage, it is dangerous for the public health and safety perspective as well. Expansion is necessary so more and more pilgrims can come and offer their religious duty. Heritage is not important, what is important is the Hajj and the Grand Mosques. For the sake of expansions, even we have to knockdown the oldest heritage building; we will do it, as this is what religion is saying.

Certainly in the context of Mecca and the Hajj, then, there is clear support of the concept of existential authenticity, the divergent views on the impacts of the destruction of Mecca's built heritage on the authenticity reflecting the (religious) world views of different groups of respondents.

6.2.3.3 Commodification: Impact on the authenticity of Mecca and pilgrims

The literature on the branding and marketing of religion provides many examples of the direct or indirect globalisation and commodification of faiths (see Chapter Three). Similarly, in the interviews it was claimed by some respondents that Mecca, like other religious destinations, has become the victim of globalisation and modernisation. However, Mecca's development was considered to be greater and more rapid than anywhere else, with global brands now occupying the cradle of Islam. As noted earlier in this chapter, some participants argued that today's Mecca has more in common with the ostentation of New York, Singapore, Hong Kong or Dubai than with a traditional

place of pilgrimage. Indeed, some referred to the hadith of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) that predicts ''that the last day will come when the guardians of Mecca compete in building tall structures around Al-Haram; which appears over the Grand Mosque from the south, the Day of Judgement is terribly close''.

Specifically, observations during the research confirmed many respondents' opinion that the authenticity of Mecca has been robbed by western style hotels and fast food restaurants. Brand names surrounding Grand Mosque; going through the King Fahd Gate, the first sign a pilgrim sees is a KFC advertisement offering 'Hajj and Umrah Meals'. Moreover, Coca Cola, boycotted by some Muslims for the company's alleged support of Israel, is widely available on the streets of Mecca. McDonald's restaurants are located near Grand Mosque, whilst Starbucks Coffee, Pizza Hut and Burger King also offer their products to pilgrims. The most distressing sight observed by the researcher was an African pilgrim praying outside the Grand Mosque using a torn Al Baik chicken box meal as a prayer mat, placing his forehead right on the logo while bowing during prayers. In the interviews, some respondents claimed that globalised Western values have been spread by the promotion of a lifestyle and a society based on the consumption of commodities, which is as mismatched with Islamic values as is Sharia law with liberal Western ideas.

R6, for example, summarised:

> If they keep Islamic values in their minds, the authenticity of Mecca can be sustained but now I feel I am walking somewhere in USA.

Interestingly, a small number of participants from the west suggested that the modernisation and commercialisation / commodification of Mecca is not a threat to its authenticity; rather, they welcomed such commercial construction as evidence of the modernity of Islam, claiming it to be a blend of pilgrimage with tourist attractions. Others suggested, in contrast, that being traditional is being 'authentic' and being contemporary is to be 'inauthentic' although this relationship was not always clear cut and depended on the experience or perspective of individual pilgrims. For example, those participants who has previously performed Hajj when there was no contemporary infrastructure in Mecca considered it considered they were having what might be described as an subjective authentic spiritual experience as it was based on traditional social constructs. Conversely, those interviews who were visiting modern Mecca for the first time sensed a form of objective (tangible) authenticity of a place and experience

built on pre-modern cultural foundations. Hence from the first-time visitor's perspective there is nothing inauthentic about Mecca. As R7 suggested:

> Look, people who came here twenty years ago, for them, yes, authenticity is under jeopardy due to modernisation. Lots of heritage places have been knocked down, there is very less rocky mountain left here. But the people who are visiting it first time, it is authentic for them because they didn't see Mecca before, so for them this modernisation is authenticity. But yes, if you have read about Mecca before coming here and you have interest in history no matter you are visiting even first time; you might say oh we lost Mecca.

However, both traditionalist and modern participants confirmed that performing the Hajj and visiting the Grand Mosque and the streets of Mecca was much easier in the past than today as currently, the number of pilgrims is ever increasing and performing Hajj rites is more complex than in the past. Participants also agreed that commodification and modernisation have brought an element of rudeness in the attitudes of both pilgrims and local Saudis, which contradicts Islamic values and is an open challenge to the authentic spiritual experience of pilgrims during the Hajj. Also, as previously noted, noted, both local Meccans and pilgrims now proudly compare the modernisation of holy city with other conventional modern touristic cities. Apart from its religious affiliation, they talk of Mecca now as more modern religious tourism city. Indeed, one example of popular tourism is the hotel rood tour (see Figure 6.18). It was also observed that both Meccans and pilgrims no longer observe GMT; rather, they adopt the Mecca Clock Tower Hotel time as official 'Muslim Time' or 'Mecca Time'.

Figure 6.18: Tickets available for the roof of the Mecca Clock Tower Hotel

Photo: Author

Consequently, the commodification of Mecca is becoming not only a threat to the spiritual experience but also the divine environment of Mecca, diverting the attention of pilgrims from worship to western touristic culture. As R42 remarked:

> Mecca is more westernised than other Middle Eastern cities. There is nothing
> authentic here, no heritage, no old markets, no old palm dates trees, no desert,
> few mountains left which will be finished in couple of years. So the city is
> actually left with no authenticity, except that this is the Hub of Islam. Local
> Mecca people minds are also diverted towards modern things; they want to see
> this city modern as they want to compete with the world modernisation. If you
> go on the top floor of Mecca Clock Tower, the majority of Saudis went up to see
> the view because this is new thing for them, it is breath-taking view. But
> remember you have to buy tour ticket to go up; this is a part of tourism. Also
> now ordinary pilgrims have started to buy that tour, so they are also enjoying
> the modernisation. So time is changing, culture is changing, therefore religiosity
> level is changing as well. The only authenticity left here is this is a religious
> holiday place, but now not for everyone

According to R11:

> When I came first time to Mecca, I have my small first baby in my hand. At that time, he was hardly two months old and he was wearing a gold chain on his neck. Suddenly a man came to me, took off gold chain, give back to me and put pure silver chain in his neck. He told me, gold is prohibited for Muslim man. I asked him how much for the silver chain; he smiled at me and said this is the gift to guest of Allah. Believe me, when I remember this incident I cried. Look what is happening now and what happened before, you are the first person after my wife I shared this incident. Those natural acts of behaviour by pilgrims are vanished now; it all about materialism now, the authenticity is highly hurt by this commercialism. I am trying to find out that authenticity in pilgrims in city but so far I couldn't find it. I can see the skyscrapers but not those ancient streets and old neighbourhoods of Mecca, but I am sorry it is no more available.

And again, participants linked the development of modern buildings in Mecca and around the Grand Mosque to the categorisation of pilgrims into tourist market segments, such as 3- to 5-star pilgrims, economy pilgrims or first class pilgrims. And these categories are easily observed (see Figure 6.19). Some respondents suggested that standardised hotels with thousands of rooms should have been built in which all pilgrims, rich and poor, lived together.

R18 commented:

> If you take equality, which is one of the concepts of Islam, for instance one day Khalid Bin Waleed was a general and next day he became a soldier, so the hotels surrounding here should be standardised and equal to same status. They shouldn't be classified like a hierarchy, 3-star, 4-star, 5-star or no star. You know very well where I am coming from, these buildings are hurting the authenticity of the Islamic concept 'equality'. Look, the hotel I am staying and I just look down, people are on the road as well, rooms are so far and they can't afford to stay in branded hotels next to Kaaba. So the authenticity of Mecca, the lessons of Islam which have been taught in Mecca, is in jeopardy due to this westernised skyscraper culture.

Figure 6.19: Economy class pilgrims walking through a 3-mile long tunnel to reach the Grand Mosque. The temperature reaches 49C.

Photo: Author

Participants also drew attention to the authenticity of the Kaaba which, as discussed in Chapter Four, is the focal point in Mecca of the Hajj. Some argued that the current Kaaba is not exactly the same as that constructed by the Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH). As time passes, it has required renovation after natural and man-made disasters. The major reconstruction took place during the life of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) before he became a Prophet. This is the occasion when the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) prevented major massacre by his rapid decision on how to place the Black Stone using a cloth that every tribe could lift up. Since then, there has been an average of one major reconstruction every few centuries. Participants argued that the ancient (authentic) Kaaba used to have doors to enter and exit and a window located to one side. The current Kaaba only has one door and no window. The Kaaba was never meant to be a cube; the original dimensions of the House included the semi-circular area known as the Hijr Ismail. Nevertheless, participants generally agreed that, despite these changes, the Kaaba it remains authentically present on its original location, and symbolises the unity among Muslims wherever they are:

Mecca authenticity is same as before as it was known by the Kaaba, and the Kaaba is authentic. However, from heritage perspective, nothing is here anymore. The reason to come here is still almost same, but the changes with the time have occurred. (R22)

However, R27 said:

Look, to the extent of Kaaba, its location and the black stone, apart from this nothing is authentic in Mecca city, everything is demolished or replicated. It is now a place where the investor is worshiping business and pilgrims are performing Hajj and Umrah. I think authenticity is now totally depends on how the individual thinks, also depending on the religious sect ideology perspective. For some, modern Mecca is authentic Mecca, for some ancient Mecca was real Mecca. It is divided between modernist pilgrims and ancients. As the time passes, future generations will define the authenticity of Mecca in their own way which I can't even predict now.

Furthermore, some respondents suggested that commodification was not only segregating pilgrims in to distinct markets, but also divided the spiritual aspect the pilgrimage and worship. For instance, it was suggested that prayers offered in the hotels in Mecca, allowed under the Fatwa referred to earlier, are absolutely inauthentic, with many arguing that one cannot offer a prayer in Jamaat (collective /assembly) until the first Saf (Row) is visible and pilgrims should be connected with each other. Thus, those who are performing prayers in the Glass Mosques of the hotels are not part of Jamaat but are offering individual prayer. This issue is, of course debateable depending religious interpretation. However, it only became an issue when the new hotels were constructed, putting into question the authenticity of the prayers and the spiritual experience of the pilgrim.

As R22 argued:

Let me tell you the concept of namaz, you cannot pray in Jamat until you can see the frontline or forward safs or the safs should be connected with each other. Therefore, the people who are praying from the hotel, they are out of Jamat absolutely. That will count their individual namaz, not with Jamat. Yes, this has been discussed here before, that the people coming on VIP Hajj, they do not come for prayers in actual Al-Haram; they spend just five days and gone, actually they only come for title only. Look those pilgrims are so unfortunate that

they came so near and couldn't perform their prayers in Jamat; if you pray in Haraam with Jamat, Allah will give you the reward of 100000 prayers. Secondly, staying in hotels is not fulfilling the essence of Hajj and also you are experiencing, I would say, an artificial spirituality, not the authentic one which comes from the heart and soul.

More succinctly:

Let me tell you one thing, due to this 5star trend the people have started taking Hajj non-seriously. As I said, this is now pure business. Even pilgrims from poor countries have started looking at luxury market. (R40)

Overall, then, to summarise this section, the interviews revealed a consensus among participants that pervasive commodification is resulting in undesirable impacts on the authenticity of the Holy City and its pilgrims. Generally, that authenticity is challenged by the modernisation and redevelopment of Mecca and the facilities and opportunities now on offer to pilgrims; at the same time, however, it is also challenged by the influence of marketing tactics on pilgrims' pilgrims' expectations or simply what by tour operators consider pilgrims to want. Either way, however, authenticity and its interpretation was found to vary amongst pilgrims.

On the one hand, it was related by some to the tangibility of cultural objects/buildings or religious events which may be either original and authentic, or replicas. Thus, for some respondents in the research, authentic Mecca is the pre-modern Mecca; contemporary, modernised Mecca is inauthentic. As a consequence, although the research revealed that the ideology of the Hajj remains, in the view of all respondents, authentic, the prevalence of tangible modern touristic commodities and facilities is not only distracting pilgrims from their spiritual objective, but arguably challenging their subjective and existential authentic experience of the holy destination itself. Therefore, it could be argued that pilgrims, who had performed the Hajj in the past, prior to the modernisation and commodification of Mecca, considered that to be more traditional, authentic experience compared with their contemporary experience of Mecca and the Hajj.

On the other hand, some, particularly those participating in the Hajj for the first time, related authenticity not to tangible objects or events, but to the less tangible aspects of the travel itinerary or the religious journey, the experience of which is considered to be authentic. Thus, irrespective of the authenticity or otherwise of the environment and other commodities on offer, the pilgrimage itself remains authentic. At the same time,

irrespective of contemporary commodification, perceptions of the authenticity of built heritage, of the place and of the journey are also dependent on factors such as the religious interpretation of a pilgrim's religious sect, their personal level of Islamic religious education, and their cultural, financial and geographic background.

Thus, on the basis of the interviews, it is evident that understanding, interpretation and indeed, experience of the concept of authenticity is personal and individualistic, yet nevertheless, there was general agreement amongst respondents that, directly or indirectly, commodification lies within the consciousness of pilgrims. Hence, the following section now considers a fourth general theme emerging from the interview data, namely, the extent to which the spiritual experience of pilgrims on the Hajj is affected by the penetration of commodification.

6.2.4 Commodification and the spiritual experience of pilgrims (Theme 4)

Given the overall purpose of this research, a fundamental issue demanding attention in the interviews was the influence of the commodification of Mecca and the Hajj on the spiritual experience of pilgrims. Certainly, those respondents who had previously participated in the Hajj pointed out that, in the past, it had been an extremely challenging religious exercise. For example, it involved walking and staying in intense heat, and searching for a proper place for prayer when millions of other pilgrims were doing likewise. However, despite (or perhaps because of) these challenges, pilgrims were spiritually transformed, achieving a sense of peace and spirituality. With the more recent modernisation and commodification of Mecca and the hajj, however, that spiritual experience is, as discussed in the following sections, now being challenged, with a number of clear themes emerging from the interviews.

6.2.4.1 The buildings of Mecca and the pilgrim's spiritual experience

As discussed both in Chapter Four and in preceding section in this chapter, Mecca has in recent years undergone significant modernisation and development, particularly with regards to tourism and hospitality infrastructure. Significant evidence emerged from the interviews that modern hotel buildings and associated tourism opportunities in Mecca serve to distract pilgrims and diluting their spiritual experience. In particular, some respondents observed that it was painful to look down on the Kaaba from a high-rise hotel, giving the impression it has been is hijacked by these buildings. Consequently, the spirituality of Kaaba and the pilgrim is perceived to have been disgraced (see Figure 6.20).

Figure 6.20: View of the Kaaba from the Glass Mosque of the Hotel

Photo: Author

For example:

> These buildings shouldn't be there and their height should be standardised not higher than Kaaba. The beauty of Kaaba is going down due to it. (R14)

Some participants shared the story that, in the past, when they were on their way to Mecca from Madinah or Jeddah they were eager to look out for for the marinates of the Grand Mosque from a distance. Now, however, they look for the high-rise towers to identify the location of the Grand Mosque, as the minarets are hidden behind them. In one sense, therefore, it might be argued that that owing to commodification and modernisation of Mecca, pilgrims who come in search of an existential experience (Cohen, 1979) in fact have a temporary diversionary experience; their attention is diverted, however, not from their ordinary home existence, as proposed by Cohen's (1979) model, but from the religious focus of their journey, thus potentially diluting their spiritual experience.

Similarly, many participants observed that during the circumambulation of the Kaaba, the time of communication between Allah and pilgrim, the visual presence of these buildings, their size, design and night-tie laser shows, impinges the pilgrim's spiritual moments. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, a new trend was observed by researcher; upon asking pilgrims for the time, rather than looking at their wrist watches they immediately look at the Mecca Clock Tower Hotel and respond 'brother, look at the Mecca Clock; Muslim Time, always it is visible from 25 to 30 miles'. In short, the experience of Mecca is dominated by its modern building.

Nevertheless, some advantages of the buildings were identified. Confirming the widespread use of the Clock Tower for telling the time, R25 said:

> There are also few advantages of that building. For instance: it will tell you from miles that this is Al-Haram. No need to ask the time, you can see the time from miles away, it will also tell you the direction of Mecca city and so on.

In addition, R26 stated:

> Look, I tell you another experience. If you want to identify where is 'Rukan-ne-Yameni' (the corner of the Ka'bah is called the Rukan-ne-Yamani, facing towards the land of Yemen, opposite to that of the Black Stone). Look at the Clock Tower Hotel; you understand where you are standing currently. So this building is also helping you to identify the different corners of Kaaba. Not only this, before pilgrims can look the minarets of Mosque-Al-Harram and pray from the far distance (dua), but now they look at the tower of hotel and do 'dua' as it is symbolising Harram from the far.

Conversely, R11 argued that:

> These building shouldn't be there. Mecca should be like desert....These building 100 percent diverted your attention from spiritual experience which I came to achieve. My tour agent told us before coming to here that the hotel you are going to stay, you will see Kaaba from your own rooms and if you want to pray from your rooms you can. So I said OK, but it is up to me whether I can do this or not.

Furthermore, this respondent drew attention towards the pilgrim's psychological behaviour and linked it with spiritual experience, suggesting that when pilgrims first

arrive in Mecca they are spiritually and emotionally charged, and pay no attention to the skyscrapers. However, after spending a week or so in Mecca, that spiritual emotion becomes weaker. For example, interviews with residents of Mecca or expatriates working in Saudi Arabia revealed that they did not want or feel the need to visit the Kaaba every day or to perform Hajj every year. Similarly, when pilgrims spend 15 days in Mecca begin to take the spiritual dimension of their visit less seriously.That is, the level of worship and the strength of spirituality begin to decrease as pilgrims begin to look for some entertainment, which can be found in the modern hotels and malls.

Indeed, some respondents added that, in the past, pilgrims had occupied themselves visiting religious heritage buildings which have now been replaced by modern skyscrapers; more specifically, in the past pilgrims spent more time in the Grand Mosque worshiping and gained maximum spiritual experience, but this has now changed. The research also revealed that thousands of pilgrims are deliberately busy shopping in the malls surrounding Grand Mosque at the time of prayers; they do not go to the Mosque for prayers, but prefer to offer prayers in the mall as, first, it is fully air-conditioned and second, it has been declared part of the Grand Mosque and upon conclusion of prayers, they can immediately return to shopping.

As R45 observed:

> I felt very uncomfortable how people perform prayers in the shopping malls where lots of advertising banners are displayed; even the place is not clean. And I also noticed when at night time this Mecca clock tower starts its laser show, people forget the Kaaba, raise their necks and smartphones and got busy in taking videos. Also due to these buildings, there is very less struggle left in the Hajj, no effort left now. It is better to hang a picture of Kaaba in your house and offer prayers there.

Another interesting point raised by 'economy class' participants was that the so-called Glass Mosques located inside star ranked-hotels are actually facilitating and promoting indolence among branded pilgrims, precisely one of the reasons why they prefer to offer their prayers inside these convenient centres instead of Grand Mosque. These respondents queried that this being the case, then what is the reason to visit Mecca and to perform the Hajj? It would, according to them, be better to switch on the television at home and offer your prayers with the Grand Mosque on live television.

More generally when discussing the distraction of the modern buildings in Mecca, R37 said:

> Absolutely you right. Look, one pilgrim is looking Allah's house and another is looking those buildings; only the first person will get the reward to be there, not the other one. Most of the pilgrims, especially from the West, they came here to show off to be honest with you. That includes British, Americans, Australian and so on, so the spirituality itself become the question. Who is having spiritual experience and who is not?

The participants argued that Hajj and pilgrims have been caught in a web of globalisation, commercialisation, and monetary exchange values. Currently the signs are clearly visible that pilgrims are looking for worldly items and enjoying the Hajj like a holiday, taking the spiritual aspect of it quite lightly, especially in the area of Arafat and Mina: 'Pilgrims are busy in enjoying religious and adventurous picnic' (R1).

Overall, then, the modernisation of Mecca manifested in the development of large western-style hotels appears, from the results of the research, to be impacting negatively on the spiritual experience of pilgrims, although it must be acknowledged that this conclusion is based largely on the criticism of some pilgrims by others. That is, it is not clear whether those taking advantage of opportunities to offer prayers in, for example, the shopping malls or from the comfort of a 'Glass Mosque' consider their own spiritual experience to have been diminished – in all likelihood they would disagree. Nevertheless, the evidence from the interviews appears to corroborate to the argument expressed in the literature that the creation of tangible and non-tangible religious tourism goods may in turn transform the spiritual experience into a commodity (Alatas, 1970; Bellah, 1970; Ciabattari, 2014; Kitiarsa, 2008; Rushkoff, 2017; Shi, 2011; York, 2000). Moreover, as the following section considers, the introduction of SMART technologies as a particular manifestation of commodification was revealed in the interviews to be having a significant impact on the spiritual experience of pilgrims.

6.2.4.2 The SMART Hajj and the pilgrim's spiritual experience

As the popularity of print media has declined, the use of SMART Media Technologies (SMT) has become increasingly pervasive around the world. SMT is not only transforming the lives of people in general; participation in particular activities, such as tourism, has significantly benefitted from SMT (Benckendorff, Sheldon & Fesenmaier, 2014; Buhalis, 2003). Inevitably, perhaps, specific forms of tourism, such as the Hajj, have not been immune from the influence of SMT. Indeed, as SMT continues to evolve,

the Saudi government has taken a number of initiatives to promote the use of SMT within the country's religious tourism industry, encouraging corporations to adopt SMT innovations, not only to facilitate e-commerce but also, in a sense, to creating the 'smart pilgrim and the 'smart Hajj'.

Just a decade ago, both public and private sector telecom providers in Saudi Arabia lacked access to SMT services. However, the administration took vital steps to liberalise the Information Technology (IT) sector and to increase private sector engagement in this business, the aim being to increase the level of Internet use and computer penetration rate. As a consequence, both the private and public sectors in Saudi Arabia are responding to the IT challenge by dynamically accepting new SMT and capitalising in the telecom sector. This is very much the case in the religious tourism sector; nowadays, smartphone services such as the Hajj SIM card, Hajj Apps, free WIFI services in the Grand Mosque Mecca, and the availability of dedicated social media Websites are facilitating pilgrims and enhancing their social experience of Hajj. However, since the Hajj has become 'high-tech', the nature of the pilgrims' experience is being challenged, its fundamental spirituality being transformed it into something more akin to a 'touristic experience', an experience which competes with and jeopardies the principles of the Hajj journey with its focus on worship. Therefore, through the expressed views of pilgrims during the interviews, this section explores how the spiritual experience of pilgrims may be influenced by the availability and use of SMT.

Many participants referred to the smartphone as the fourth 'Devil of Hajj' which is impacting on the spiritual experience of pilgrims. Yet interestingly, during the research it was observed that almost all pilgrims carry this 'devil', even sleeping with it (see Figure 6.21) while they are in the official dress of Hajj. As R2 expressed, 'there are more smartphones in the Hajj than pilgrims.

Figure: 6.21: Pilgrims' obsession with smartphones

Photo: Author

Participants commented that smartphone and other SMART gadgets have become part of contemporary life; indeed, undertaking the Hajj without a smartphone might be something of a challenge for contemporary globalised pilgrims. As R2 remarked:

> You are saying less spirituality, I am saying there is no spirituality; it is only world and world. Before morning time, people say Allah's name first then start {on their hones]. In the middle of sleep they check their smartphone for messages. So people are doing Hajj only to show others, not to gain or become more spiritual.

Moreover, the moment the pilgrims land in Saudi Arabia, the first question they ask their Hajj agents is how, when and from where can a Hajj SIM card be obtained? Indeed, some participants noted that one of the advantages of being a branded pilgrim is that they receive their Hajj SIM cards in the country of origin or in their hotel rooms; they do not need to stand in long queues in the heat to obtain a SIM card from a Saudi telecom office or from authorised banks. One interviewee even suggested that such is the demand for the SIM card that many locals' foreigners are selling them on black market with the premises of Al-Haram.

Generally, respondents acknowledged that rapid change in pilgrims' technological, social and consumer behaviour and in the travel industry as a whole is proving to be a potential factor in motivating the Saudi government to adopt SMT. However, although government intervention, such as creating e-religion portal concepts, including Hajj Apps, -bracelets, Wi-Fi services and social media websites, in some respects enhances the pilgrim's social and technological experience, it may nevertheless impact negatively on their spiritual experience. Indeed, the contemporary Hajj is representative of a new global era in which even the sacred has intersections with the mechanisms of global capitalism and the technologies of social networking. Nevertheless, while the spiritual experience of many pilgrim SMT users is arguably in decline, it certainly remains possible that their motivations to participate in the Hajj remain spiritual. Though, the likelihood of a diluted spiritual experience depends upon various factors, including the directions technology takes and the use of it. However, there is no doubt that the era of the 'smart Hajj' has arrived. As R36 remarked:

> Throughout Hajj, I have seen people sleeping, eating, drinking, going to toilet, sitting in the Arafat, Mina only with smart gadgets. This is like an electronic Hajj. We should take the picture of our characters, not our physical appearance.

Currently, the connectivity of pilgrims via their smart devices highlights a new period in the contemporary Hajj and in the spiritual experience of pilgrims. Moreover, on the one hand, many considered SMT to be having a deleterious effect on behaviour and spiritual experience of pilgrims:

> Look, these technologies are taking our spiritual experience away and making us like a tourist, so therefore we should avoid them. (R42)

On the other hand, some argued that the use of SMT is useful, enabling pilgrims to cope with unexpected situations and to complete pilgrimage activities more efficiently and effectively. Yet, whether it is at the cost of the spiritual experience of the pilgrim remains questionable, particularly as smartphones are becoming increasingly central to many people's day-to-day lives. In other words, interviewees accepted that the incursion of SMT into the lives of pilgrims in general and into Mecca in particular is unstoppable; new technologies will continue to influence the lives of pilgrims, to transform religious destinations and to impact upon the traditional spiritual experiences of pilgrims. However, it is necessary to understand the experience of the Hajj in the 21st Century and to recognise the increasing numbers of contemporary pilgrims who bring

their own interpretation of a spiritual experience through the use of SMT during the Hajj. As R15 said:

> Actually, the days are not far when one day people will perform Hajj on Facebook. Haji is focusing now on touristic things rather than discovering spirituality.

6.2.4.3 Marketing the Hajj and the pilgrim's spiritual experience

In the literature, some commentators refer to the commodification of religion in general and the concept of 'pay to pray' in particular (Shackley, 2001; Woodward, 2004). As observed throughout this thesis and discussed earlier in this chapter in particular, this concept of 'pay to pray' is of course applicable to the case of the Hajj. As previously noted, the majority of participants in the interviews identified the Hajj as a business and specifically that it is necessary to pay to participate in the ritual of Hajj, a situation that has arisen from the strong market position of Hajj tour operators. These tour operators construct Hajj packages as a tourism commodity which they then present and sell in the form of religious holiday packages of varying quality the pilgrim has to spend, more luxurious and 'easy' experience.

One characteristic of the marketing of Hajj tours that emerged in the interviews is the practice of buying a Hajj package on instalments. Alternatively stated, in some countries, such as the UK, it is possible to purchase a Hajj tour on the basis of an initial payment, the remainder being paid in monthly instalments, a process which is counter to Islamic and Hajj principles. This suggests that, for some pilgrims, performing the Hajj has become similar to buying any other commodity on credit, even though according to Islamic principles, the Hajj is not mandatory for those physically or financially unable to participate. Hence, the spiritual meaning or experience of the Hajj becomes diminished; the pilgrimage has become a commodity marketed and sold on credit.

More generally, interview respondents suggested that the Hajj has become like tourism, closely related to religious breaks and cultural tourism. Indeed, Saudi Arabia is seen as developing a tourism business based on a faith-based market which is not only recession proof but will continue to flourish, pilgrims being motivated by religion with the result that, to an extent, the price is overlooked. Thus, on the one hand pilgrims are willing to pay higher prices in response to the marketing and commodification of Hajj whilst, on the other hand, this enables Saudi Arabia to invest more in branded hospitality and tourism infrastructure in Mecca to profit more from that commodification. As R51 observed:

Branded or non-branded pilgrims, both poor and rich pilgrims have become status conscious people and more materialistic, so therefore I would say both pilgrims' spiritual experience is in jeopardy. I really do not know where we are taking the simple Hajj.

6.2.4.4 The role of the government and the pilgrim's spiritual experience

Reference has already been made to the influence of the Saudi government on the nature of the spiritual experience of the Hajj, particularly with respect to the religious 'Fatwas' (religious rulings) affirming hotels and malls as a part of Al-Haram in order to accommodate and to control the flow of traffic. From the interviews, it became evident that the majority of participants condemned this ruling, arguing that hotels are not suitable places for prayers, whilst it is difficult to imagine pilgrims offering prayers in Costa Coffee or Starbucks even though they are also part of Al-Haram.

Some also pointed out that if the poor pilgrims wanted to offer their prayers in the so-called Glass Mosques inside star-rated hotels, they would not be allowed to do so as they are not the residents of the hotel. However, Islam categorically holds that the Mosque or prayer area is for everyone and, therefore, not permitting entry to the Glass Mosques can be argued as a contradicting the equality lesson of Hajj. All Muslims should be equal in Mecca and should be treated equally, but this is not happening.

For R39:

> … This is not fair, very un-Islamic. Imagine you are praying in the Costa Coffee shop and malls where thousands of picture are hanging for the promotion of the product, these things are taking your spiritual experience away, I can't believe it. I have also noticed if you are not staying in that hotel you are not allowed to pray there. I mean how come? If you declare this is the premises of Al-Haram then every Muslim has a right to pray in that hotel, but I have seen police stop the non-residents. This is not equality this is commercialism.

Participants recognised how Saudi Arabia is investing in the luxury markets for the Hajj but failing to invest in basic facilities for the Hajj. For instance, many provided the example of the toilets at Arafat, Muzdalifah and Mina. These are, of course, a necessary basic facility which should be a basic facility but they are in a poor and unhygienic condition. It was suggested that the government is only investing money where they can get a financial return. As R12 said:

I would say to Saudi government, instead of increasing element of luxury in pilgrim's life they should concentrate on the facilities. Supply and support pilgrims with facilities rather than leisure; leisure is decreasing spiritual experience but facilities are increasing it.

Similarly:

We are the guest of Allah not the guest of Saudi Arabia; try to work on this. Do not create an environment which can hijack spirituality from the journey, create something which support and strengthen spirituality. (R16)

6.2.4.5 Materialism, the pilgrim and the spiritual experience

There was overwhelming evidence from the interviews corroborating the notion that the majority of pilgrims succumb to materialism owing to the commodification of Mecca and the Hajj, regardless of their financial status. Many respondents suggested that the spiritual behaviour of pilgrims is changing as a result of the increasing consumption of material commodities, which in turn results in a more touristic rather spiritual experience. Whether the almost universal adoption of SMT, particularly smartphones, the division of the Hajj into different quality packages, or the growth in ultra-modern western style branded hotels, commodification has challenged the traditional simplicity of the pilgrim as they become materialistic Hajis. Nevertheless, some participants also argued that this is a natural phenomenon; human beings will always seek material things, especially when they are easily available. According to R15:

I think going back 15 years ago, people were also shopping at that time, yes, the nature of shopping was different. They were buying dates and prayer mats; now it's from gold to perfumes, from mobiles to blankets, from Gucci to Armani. In the past, pilgrims do not have the malls but if they had, they do the same as current pilgrims are doing. Pilgrims are not now more materialistic; there is always the element of materialism in every human since this world became reality. Yes, the levels are different it was less before' now it is more due to the commercialisation of Mecca.

Despite this respondent's argument, many acknowledged that pilgrims who participated in the Hajj in the past gave up material pursuits. However, materialism now exists in the lives of pilgrims, even during the Hajj, with the result that the element of spirituality is on the decline. Thus, the meaning of the Hajj is that pilgrims should disconnect

themselves from the material world and focus on the spiritual experience of the journey, but the opposite is now occurring, as recognised in the literature (see Chapter 3; also Einstein, 2008; Francesconi, 2009; Haq et al, 2009; Kale, 2004; Sizer, 1999).

Interview participants also identified that, owing to their materialistic behaviour, pilgrims have become rude or critical towards their hotel's facilities, food and beverages services and other amenities. Consequently, the trend amongst pilgrims of complaining and being aggressive during the Hajj is becoming more evident. Additionally, when pilgrims are asked how their Hajj going or, as observed, when sharing their Hajj experience on phone, they first talk about their luxury experience or hotel experience before talking about their Hajj (spiritual) experience. Indeed, some respondents suggested that even 'economy class' pilgrims staying far from the Grand Mosque are still affected by or demonstrate materialism. It was observed, for instance, that even economy class pilgrims who had little or no money to eat still were able to top up their smartphone, and were busy taking selfies and enjoying chatting on social media websites. Nevertheless, the economy class pilgrims accused branded pilgrims of being more materialistic than them, even though, the element of materialism appeared present in their own behaviour and desires. Thus, as R6 observed:

> Yes, the Haji is becoming tourist now. Like in other countries people go for holidays and vacations, so people also now taking Hajj and Umrah as a holiday, especially the rich people. It is like religious holidays for them, they discuss, like, let's do first year Umrah in Ramadan and next year Hajj.

Participants also expressed their concerns regarding the lack of religious education among Muslims especially from the west, suggesting that people are now more interested in 'worldly' education which can improve their opportunities for achieving wealth. As R13 stated, 'No money, no life, no money, no Hajj'

More generally, R19 explained:

> Look, Hajj is same, but the way we behave in the Hajj or the way we want to experience spirituality is actually lost due to materialism in Muslims. But again, we can't be Prophet; he was something divine, blessed with the power of Allah. Even if we want to copy him, we will never ever be successful; he was specially blessed with Allah's love, where we people are only looking for world. Actually we Muslims make the religion very complicated ourselves, it was very easy but due to lack of research we started listen to uneducated religious scholars which

led us in to a black hole of the religion, which is why our spiritual experience of Hajj is in jeopardy. If any pilgrim claims he is like an angel it is absolutely nonsense. Look, culture is not static; it is changing with the time. Islam stay same since centuries but its followers have changed a lot. For instance, religious practise and its spirituality have decreased due to modern era. I mean, how many Muslims pray five times a day, just forget Hajj, believe me it is not even the half of Muslim population.

More specifically, this participant argued that if you ask a pilgrim, can you perform Hajj alone or do you know how to perform Hajj rituals, more than half of the population will say no, mainly what the Hajj tour guide is there for. But if you ask pilgrims, what are your future financial plans and how you are going to fulfil them, they will comprehensive details about that. Hence, according to this participant, religion is taken as granted; pilgrims just go to buy Hajj package from the market and the job is done. Very few pilgrims read about the Hajj and how it can be performed.

R40 summarised:

Look this luxury Hajj market is now changing the behaviour and spiritual experience of pilgrims a lot, because the faith is getting weaker, primarily the root cause of it… Look you are doing PhD because you want to go and know in depth of these problems, but the pilgrims are only looking on the upper layer of onion, they do not want to know how many layers this onion has, so what they see they buy, what they look they act, therefore I repeat that religious faith and the spiritual experience is getting weaker and weaker everyday due to this modernism.

6.2.4.6 Weaker religiosity among pilgrims

A significant theme to emerge from the interviews, particularly during those with respondents who had previously participated in the Hajj, was the perceived decline in the level of religiosity amongst contemporary pilgrims. More specifically, a number of 'experienced' pilgrims claimed that there was a significant difference in religiosity of past and present pilgrims on the Hajj, providing examples such as, in the past, pilgrims focused only on their worship during their circumambulation of Mecca, there being no distraction of high rise hotels and shopping malls surrounding the Grand Mosque. Equally, there was no concept amongst past pilgrims that they were living far or near from the Grand Mosque; the attitude of both pilgrims and local Meccans was such that they sometimes shared food and accommodation. Similarly, if pilgrims were short of

money, shopkeepers would not say anything but keep on helping pilgrims as they considered them the Guest of Allah. Moreover, there were no border or day restrictions between Mecca and Madinah, meaning that pilgrims could stay as many days as they liked in any holy city.

The respondents also spoke more generally about how, in the past, Mecca and Madinah were full of religious and cultural heritage treasures, such as the authentic well of Zam Zam water and original Prophets' houses, but now it is all history. In the past, they felt that time had stopped in Mecca and Madinah; there was a strong sense of peace and spirituality. Now, everything is busy and rushed. In the past, there was no concept of buying a Hajj package; all pilgrims were equal no rich no poor. Having arrived in Mecca, pilgrims would call home just once and then focus on their worship, forgetting about the world and its materialistic commodities. There was no technology to distract pilgrims from their spiritual experience. As R37 summarised:

> Actually, before we were pilgrims now we are religious holiday makers in Mecca.

More specifically, some respondents suggested that, in the past, pilgrims had a more serious attitude towards religion than contemporary pilgrims; they used to read in depth about the Hajj and participating was considered a real honour. The Hajj then was tailor-made journey; pilgrims prepared for it years in advance. And the experience itself as more akin to a traditional pilgrimage; brought their own tents, there were no catering companies, so they cooked food themselves. They travelled by foot from Mecca to Madinah or with few trucks on the road; for these 'experienced' pilgrims, that was the real essence of Hajj. According to R56:

> Believe me, it was a religious fun, worships with hardships and all pilgrims were very united. Muzdalifah, Arafat and Mina has no mattress, you have to carry everything with you if you want any comfort, but believe me at that time you feel I am doing a Hajj which was full of struggle also full of love for Allah, not like today that we are on religious picnic. We used to stand on the Arafat Mountain like Prophet and pray there and then go to Jabal Rahmat and going to Mosque Khaif and Nimra was not too much problem, there were few trucks in the whole Hajj. But now I have seen pilgrims are fighting, having arguments, physically and spiritually very weak, now your movement are isolated you are in the control of Hajj tour agent. This time I have feeling in Arafat that I am sitting in a luxury tent and attending someone wedding ceremony in the middle of desert. When I came here I was highly spiritually charged, but it was sad to see that,

except following Hajj rites, the spiritual enthusiasm from the hearts of pilgrim were missing. There was no unity at all, look like we were here for some adventures mission. Before people have lot of fear of God in their heart but now every person thought he knows everything and do not want to learn.

Similarly, R56 related:

In my previous Hajj I was reading, reading and reading hadith and Quran and try to summarise what is going on, I was fully prepared for that. For instance, before we stopped at night in Halifah, after put the Ihram then move to Mecca, during that there was insect jumped over my Ihram and I know this is the test of Allah. But another pilgrim moved forward and killed it, consequently we fed ten poor with this act, so you can see how was the previous spiritual experience what was the level of religiosity we had, we even do not want to kill an insect. But now you can hardly find this type of spiritual experience.

Another participant explained that Allah said the Hajj is an exam and pilgrim will be tested. Before Miqat (the place where pilgrims wear their Hajj clothes) a pilgrim can do anything but, having crossed Miqat and having Niyat (intentions) of the Hajj, the trial will start. Nowadays, however, contemporary pilgrims share jokes, playing with technological gadgets and busying themselves taking selfies rather than concentrating on worship and taking Hajj rules as granted. They forget the 'dos' and 'don'ts' of Ihram owing to their modern lives. In principle, once Miqat is crossed pilgrims should consider themselves as companions of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and behave appropriately; yet, currently pilgrims focus on the material rather than the spiritual world. What spiritual rewards then, asked this respondent, can contemporary pilgrims expect from the Hajj with these attitudes?

Pilgrims' touristic behaviour at Miqat can be observed in Figure 6.22, whilst Figure 6.23 shows a pilgrim busy taking a video while standing in the Grand Mosque.

Figure 6.22: Pilgrims busy taking selfies while in Ihram at Miqat

Photo: Author

Figure 6.23: A Pilgrim busy in taking a video in the Grand Mosque

Photo: Author

As R56 said:

> When the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) arrived at the Miqaat (Place where Muslim dressed-up in Hajj official attire) he said…Allah make this a Hajj without riya (no ostentatiousness) and without trying to be heard of. But now at the Miqat majority of the pilgrims are taking selfies as reminders. They take selfies on Tawaf, Arafat, Mina and while throwing stones at the Jamarat in different poses.

6.2.4.7 Hajj lessons and pilgrim's spiritual experience

As previously considered, many interviewees expressed concerns regarding the extent to which the lessons of Hajj, namely are equality, simplicity and no ostentatious behaviour, are being challenged by the contemporary commodified Hajj. Nevertheless, there was no consensus; some felt that those lessons were heeded, whilst others (the majority) believed them to be in jeopardy.

Those respondents agreeing with the former position observed that all are equal in the premises of the Grand Mosque; there are no rich and poor, no black and white, no king and no slave. However, those supporting the latter position challenged this, claiming that even in the Grand Mosque, equality only partially exists. For example, when any VIP arrives on the Hajj, as is often the case, they are prioritised according to their status; when a VIP pilgrim wants to kiss the Black stone; all ordinary pilgrims are held back and not allowed near to the Black Stone. Moreover, the door to the house of Allah, the Kabba, is opened for VIP pilgrims to enter, a privilege that ordinary pilgrims can only dream of. In addition, additionally, they argued that the three lessons of the Hajj are challenged by the commodification of services and the subsequent segregation of pilgrims. In fact, participants agreed that the only thing which unites pilgrims and establishes the principles of equality, simplicity, no ostentatiousness is the official dress of Ihram.

R48 confirmed that:

> This is obvious there is a difference, the rich man shop is different from the poor man, and the rich man products are different from the poor. We are only so-called equal in the Grand Mosque but not in the so-called Al-Haram area which is beyond the Grand Mosque but considered part of it.

6.2.4.8 Future generations and the spiritual experience

A final issue to emerge from the interviews within the context of commodification and the spiritual experience was concern for the future – in particular, the potential further dilution of the experience of future generations of pilgrims. Many respondents suggested that, given the perceived weak spiritual foundation of the current Hajj, future pilgrims will approach the Hajj guided by their own religious educational background, religious interpretation and how much they spend. According to some respondents, many contemporary Muslims have only a limited Islamic education, and for future generations it may be even more limited. Hence, in light of the ongoing commodification and modernisation of Mecca, future pilgrims view the Hajj as a religious holiday, adopting the role of a tourist. One participant drew attention towards a new hotel, the Abraj Kudai, the world's biggest hotel which was soon in Mecca. With four helipads and ten thousand ultra-luxury rooms, future generations may perform the Hajj circumambulation on the helicopter, leaving only to the imagination what the level of the spiritual experience of future generations will be: 'Nothing is impossible in contemporary Hajj.' (R58)

To summarise briefly the findings of this fourth theme, it is clear from the interviews that, as a consequence of the combination of, on the one hand, the marketing and commodification of Mecca and the Hajj and, on the other hand, increasing demands for and consumption of commodified goods and services, from luxury hotel rooms to SMT services and products, the fundamental spiritual experience of the Hajj is being challenged and, indeed, diluted. More specifically, the general perception held by many respondents in the research was that the Hajj, traditionally a voyage of devotion, is increasingly becoming a journey in which spiritual behaviour mixed with the experience of an enjoyable religious holiday. Moreover, it is a journey which, in principle, prohibits ostentation but is now becoming an opportunity for the rich to display their wealth and superiority, in so doing igniting the desire amongst less wealthy pilgrims to similarly consume material commodities. As a consequence, the evidence suggests that, overall, the pilgrim's spiritual behaviour is becoming materialistic, consequently, distracting and diluting the spiritual experience.

It must be emphasised, of course, that the conclusions drawn from this theme are based on observed behaviour and the responses of interview participants with regards to their opinions or perceptions of other pilgrims' behaviour and experience. Expressly, it remains unclear how individual pilgrims perceive the nature of their own experience.

Hence, the final theme / section in this chapter considers another issue central to this thesis: the extent of the 'touristification' of the Hajj experience.

6.2.5 The commodified touristic experience of the pilgrim (Theme Five)

With regards to perceptions of the extent to which the Hajj has been transformed through commodification into a touristic experience, the research yielded some interesting although seemingly contradictory results. Certainly, just as it is argued in the literature that the commodification of religion and religious events is not a new phenomenon (Chapter 3), there was general consensus amongst interview respondents that Islam and the Hajj have similarly become commodified.

Specifically, and as discussed previously, in order to experience the Hajj pilgrims, are obliged to purchase a Hajj package which, similar to standard holiday packages, are based on varying levels of service and quality (and price) and are promoted to appeal to particular target markets. In the interviews, many participants suggested that the nature of the pilgrim's spiritual experience depends very much on the characteristic of the package that they purchase. Hence, within the context of different Hajj packages there exists a varying trade-off not only between religious ritual values being exchanged for comfort and luxuries but also between a spiritual experience and the modern commodified material mentality of pilgrims.

As a consequence, the perceptions and, indeed, criticisms of many respondents collectively point to a general attitude that the Hajj has become a product /experience for sale in what might be described as the 'supermarket' of religious tourism. This, in turn, is influencing the social, moral, religious and consumer behavior of pilgrims (which is inevitably subject to social and cultural influences in their day-to-day 'normal' life) to the extent that it is becoming more touristic. All the evidence from the research suggests that pilgrims are demanding greater degrees of comfort and luxury during the Hajj, commensurately displaying less willingness perform the Hajj in simple manner. Therefore, it could be argued that both the Saudi government and pilgrims are succumbing to the power of the market; as with other manifestations of religious tourism, the Hajj is part of an industry (the global tourism sector) built on the commoditisation and commercialisation of places, peoples and cultures.

In this vein, R5 remarked

> Well, on a serious note this seems true. The Haji is hungry for comfort, luxuries, look this is not the act of Haji, Haji should focus only on Hajj and worship but,

yes, I would say now they are like tourist, because of this commercialisation, and take my words, if sooner or later the Saudi government won't take any action it will get more worst in future. Look, the mistakes are from both sides, from government and from pilgrim own individual act.

In particular, the research revealed that the Hajj pilgrim's traditional existential experience, as defined more broadly by Cohen (1979) as one in which the (existential) tourist becomes immersed – or their spiritual centre becomes located – in the destination culture is being diminished; it is becoming transformed into a recreational, diversionary or experiential touristic experience (Cohen, 197; see Chapter 3). More specifically, traditionally pilgrims who believed their spiritual centre could be found in Mecca would fulfil their desire for existential (spiritual) experiences through engagement in simple religious rituals and gaining new spiritual strength from the Hajj. However, this has been jeopardised by commodification processes, in turn distracting pilgrims from both of their existential worlds. Precisely, from the interviews, it is apparent that Hajj pilgrims live in two worlds; first, their routine materialistic life back home and, second, the world moving around their spiritual centre from which they seek spiritual nourishment (see Cohen, 1979). However, as one participant expressed, a world without the spiritual centre (second world) renders their routine world (first world) meaningless. Therefore, an existential experience related to their spiritual centre (Mecca) is arguably of fundamental importance to the lives of Hajj pilgrims. However, the research reveals that pilgrim's routine materialistic life is impacting significantly their spiritually-centred life socially, economically and religiously, thereby diluting their spiritual experience.

Adopting a middle ground position in the context of touristic recreational experiences, it was observed during the Hajj that pilgrims were both enthusiastic yet worried about services and commodities on offer. On the one hand, it was evident that pilgrims were increasing involved in the use of SMT, researching, reporting and recording their Hajj experience on social media. At the same time, many were seeking better, luxury accommodations or upgrades in their lodging status, as well as spending time shopping. Thus, on the other hand, many expressed concerns over the loss of their (and other pilgrims') deeper sense of spirituality and contentment.

Indeed, some argued the environment of the Hajj has become a tourism environment in which pilgrims have become more like a tourist, enjoying a vacationer's experience where everything is stimulating. Moreover, there is less concern amongst pilgrims for the sacred, the authentic or, indeed, inauthentic; rather, the focus is on taking

advantage of the consumption opportunities offered by commodification. As R1 remarked:

> You are correct. I mean, the pilgrim is asking for more and more and more, there is no limit. They are materialistic like tourist, and now stage came where you are only for the world and your intentions towards religious spirituality is vanishing.

Other respondents also suggested that contemporary pilgrims on the Hajj are more or less like tourists; for example, they are buying Hajj packages just the same as tourists buy holiday packages. Moreover, pilgrims now engage in similar activities as tourists: shopping, sight-seeing, utilising SMT to facilitate and record their journey and experiences and so on.

> For sure yes, for sure yes. Look people are showing [on social media] during circumambulation, Mom or friends, I am in fourth round, I am in sixth round. What is this? Tourists are doing that. (R8)

> I have seen a pilgrim who was talking to another pilgrim during Tawaf without using headphones. On the other line person might said I want to kiss Kaaba; can you take your phone near to it? That person touches his smartphone with the wall of Kaaba and the person kissed it. The reason I am telling you this that 'virtual kiss' in Kaaba has been started now. This is nothing but touristic experience, nothing to do with spiritual experience. (R25)

Furthermore, it was observed and also identified in interviews that some pilgrims adopt the role of what Cohen (1979) describes as a diversionary touristic experience. Mainly, during the research a number of pilgrims were encountered who admitted feeling bored in their 'first world' and, thus decided to undertake the Hajj as a diversionary and recreational touristic experience, devoid of religious meaning or intent. For example, R43 admitted|:

> For me personally, I came for my Mom as Mahram (all those males whom a woman cannot marry at any time in her life whatsoever)

> *Interviewer:* So you do not come for Hajj?

Not really, My Mom put pressure on me to come. I was just feeling bored and decided to accompany Mom, I am very young to do Hajj.

By referring to his relative youth, this respondent highlighted the fact that the majority of pilgrims are middle-aged or older; much fewer younger people participate in the Hajj. This might reflect an individual's financial or domestic circumstances; equally, the perception in the Muslim world is that, by middle age, a person will have committed sufficient sins to warrant the penance of undertaking the Hajj. Either way, R43 suggested that most of younger pilgrims found the Hajj meaningless and, if given the choice between the Hajj and a holiday in the United States would choose the latter. Indeed, from the research it became evident that, unless possessing strong religious convictions, most of younger people would participate in the Hajj only if required to do so by their families. At the same time, although older pilgrims would, in the past, be more likely to undertake and experience the Hajj within the confines of religious beliefs and rituals, amongst many respondents was the opinion that, increasingly, all pilgrims, bring, to a lesser or greater extent, the familiarity and comfort of their home, materialistic world with them (travelling within Cohen's (1972) 'environmental bubble'). Consequently, their potential spiritual experience is transformed into one that is, according to Cohen's (1979) phenomenological typology, that of a recreational, divisionary or, at best, experiential tourist:

I think the materialism in pilgrim will come up more, it will be and it is currently like tourism place, not only we come to offer Hajj but to have holidays here as well, to experience 5-star religious journey holidays. Currently the spiritual experience is weak but in future it will be very weaker and we become more tourists, and this is due to globalisation of the world, we are living in. (R45)

Other respondents noted that, owing to the commercialisation and 'touristification' of Mecca and the Hajj, the spirituality that is considered to be the relationship between Allah and his people is becoming muddled and weaker. Pilgrims who used to sit in the Grand Mosque for long hours sharing stories of Prophets now busy sharing their touristic views with each other either face to face or on the social media: 'If one would say that spirituality become digitalised it won't be wrong' (R37). Specifically, topics of conversation amongst pilgrims heard and observed during the research typically focused on: what we are going to eat in lunch and dinner? Where we will meet again? Tell me about the shops and shopping? Where I can buy a SIM card or top up my smartphone? Can you add me to your social media websites? And, tell me about your excursions.

The touristic characteristic of the contemporary Hajj is also evident in pilgrims'
shopping habits. For example, whereas once pilgrims used to purchase only simple
prayer mats, dates to gift or simple models of the Kaaba, now they seek and buy
branded commodities such as clothes, cosmetics and precious jewellery. Indeed, one
of the best-selling prayer mats has a picture of hotel buildings behind Kaaba (Figure
6.24), whilst also popular are is one of the best-selling prayer mat in the Hajj of 2016,
and also precious hotel models (Figure 6.25).

Figure 6.24: Bestselling prayer mat with the picture of 5-star hotels behind the Kaaba

Photo: Author

Figure 6.25: Souvenirs of the Hajj: Mecca Clock Tower Hotel

Photo: Author

With specific regards to the evidently popular pastime of shopping whilst on the Hajj, opinions expressed by participants pointed to two potential justifications on the part of pilgrims; first, they are buying goods from and for the Holy land and, second, Allah has endowed them with the necessary financial resources. In a manner of speaking, they are, in a sense, leaning on the shoulder of spirituality to justify their consumer behaviour which, by extension, could be interpreted that spirituality itself has become a commodity.

For example, according to R4:

> Yes, if Allah blessed you with money and you are performing VIP Hajj then there is no harm in it. Do Hajj according to your status… if you have money and doing Hajj on donkey this is not fair either, if Allah blessed you with money then it should be seen as well. Some people misinterprets that if you are rich but going for Hajj then perform Hajj in a third class package; no, no, no, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) didn't say this anywhere. Look, from the time of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), the Sahba and other Prophets were having expensive horses' camels, clothes, using expensive perfumes as well, they were collecting these items as well, and these things were existing at that time as well. Prophet

Mohammad (PBUH) never said to them, do not use expensive perfumes or do not ride on expensive horses, no, no. Similarly if Allah blessed you with money and you can afford a £1 million car then you should buy £1Million car. In this case you are not showing this to any one because Allah gave you power to spend that much. Simple is that whatever you want to do, do it for Allah and do it within the power what Allah gave you do not exceed that.

But, on the other hand, R40 said that, according to the Quran…

'These are the people who buy the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter: their penalty shall not be lightened nor shall they be helped' (Verse, Surah Al-Baqara, 86).

More generally, it could be argued that Muslims are motivated to purchase contemporary materialistic products owing to broader changes in society, specifically the emergence, at least in Western countries, of a consumer society (Lury, 2011); they increasingly have the desire to earn and enjoy material goods in during their lives rather than focusing on life after death. And one outcome of this is the need for a spiritual experience being overtaken by the desire for a touristic experience:

Yes, yes, yes, definitely it is happening. I am coming every year with pilgrims, I saw that the quality of the pilgrims is going down due to materialism, the selfie thing; you are posing in the holy city, for instance you raising hands not for doa, just to take picture, not good. The hands should be raised for Allah, not for selfie pose. Pilgrims are busy in luxuries; too much shopping trend has increased among pilgrims. Before, pilgrims used to buy the replica of Kaaba and now the Mecca Clock Tower Hotel replica. Also when the Haji go back to home country, people ask them what you brought for me other than religious gifts. (R52)

Interestingly, some respondents divided pilgrims into two groups in relation to understanding their spiritual experience of the Hajj. On the one hand, there were those pilgrims who had travelled to Mecca for the first time, and who were mostly staying in star ranking hotels, referred to earlier in this thesis as 'branded Haji'. On the other hand, there were pilgrims who had previously visited Mecca and participated in the Hajj, and who possessed strong religious beliefs and knowledge

Interpreting comments made by respondents, pilgrims within the first group perceive their spiritual experience based on two perceptions. Firstly, what they see is reality to them; this is understood to be a spiritual experience, irrespective of the commodification of the journey and the visible modernisation of Mecca. Indeed, as pilgrims they were expecting their experience of the Hajj to be comfortable, characterised by the comfort of luxury amenities and the opportunities offered by the modern city of Mecca. As media-conscious pilgrims, they live in the contemporary world of reality.

Moreover, pilgrims in this first group consider that their flexible, contemporary, practical approach is compatible with their religion and their spiritual experience of the Hajj, as it maintains a balance between the world, religion and holy event of the Hajj. Certainly, in the interviews, first-time Hajj participants stated that the reality of modern Hajj and modern Mecca should be acknowledged; the city of Mecca has been transformed over the last decade, in a sense 'catching up' with modern cities elsewhere around the world. Thus, a pilgrims arriving in the city of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) with the perception that the house of Allah is still located perhaps come from more remote, underdeveloped places in the world. Conversely, those from more developed, economically advance countries are aware of the modernisation of Mecca and their potential experience of it. In addition, pilgrims from the developed world have a greater interest in and experience of commodified life; for them, the spiritual experience is implicit in their participation in the Hajj; they are following the path of religious reality within a contemporary commodified world:

> Obviously, the Hajj performed by Prophet Muhammad was full of hardships, struggle and when he migrated from Madinah to Mecca; he took seventy camels with him. So, we can't do that now, if we do it will be a chaos here. No doubt Prophet struggled a lot at that time but, even currently, we are also struggling according to our strength. But I want to say that, as well, we now as pilgrims are very soft and having less faith in Allah and spiritually is weak. Prophet Faith on Allah was enormous, his spiritually strong like anything, but we are not like him now.

In contrast, the second group of pilgrims base their spiritual identities on previous visits to Mecca, associating with the past through their understanding of the emergence of a religious culture as a means of giving meaning to their present lives. These pilgrims connecting their spiritual experience with the built religious cultural heritage and past experiences; consequently, when that heritage no longer exists (its destruction related

to the modernisation and commodification of Mecca) that marker of spirituality is lost, as is the religious identity of pilgrims. Hence, commodification represents the sacrifice of spiritual values for material gain, and spirituality becomes a touristic experience.

Amongst this second group, who were in the majority of those interviewed, the responsibility for this diminished spiritual experience / enhanced tourist experience lies with those who, through promoting the commodification of Mecca and the Hajj, altered religious history and removed the element of simplicity from the ritual. In so doing, they are not only responsible for this transformation in pilgrims' experiences, but are also delivering a message to future pilgrims that the market is religion, that spirituality can be overtaken contemporary commodities, and that the future lies in (religious) tourism. One respondent argued if these contemporary commodities did not exist in Mecca, then Hajj would have remained as it was in the past:

> Look, we are living in 5star, we are using smartphone, we are gossiping and chatting on the social media, what we are here in Mecca during Hajj is doing business. We in Hajj telling lie; which spirituality you are talking about? Our focus is not Hajj, our focus is to earn the degree of Haji and go back and tell people of our community we are Haji. I know people coming every year here for Hajj and Umrah, not for worship but to show off people. Look, wealth has tremendously increased among Muslim world, so people take Hajj or Umrah event like a holiday, and we are tourist. (R37)

According to another respondent:

> The modernism is actually the tools of destruction in Hajj. Why Muslims lost Ottoman Empire, Persian Empire, and Moghul Empire because they were all started looking at comfort and luxuries and other obnoxious acts and left their real path which was holding the rope of religion. Why currently ostentatious behaviour is increasing in pilgrims? Why equality is distracted? Why simplicity is vanishing from Hajj rites? Because we are following the wrong paths, a path of devil, not the path of religion. That is why we are becoming tourist. (R18)

Relating one experience, R11 said:

> No doubt this is tourism, but it is also depending on individual as well. Question is, who are you? Pilgrims are bombarded with western brands. One day I bought lemonade from Starbucks and going back to my hotel. A woman came

to me when I was drinking; she said I want to drink as well. So I bought drink for her from another shop. Now that woman looking at me and want to have Starbucks drinks and refused the drink I just bought from another shop. The point I want to raise is due to these tourist brands, here the poor people too is obsessed with brands. They want to taste that, but they can't afford it. Why there is too much difference? The gap between rich and poor pilgrim is increasing every day, socially morally and economically.

Generally, most interview participants were of the view that not only the Saudi government but others as well are exploiting the spiritual experience of pilgrims, using the religious ritual of the Hajj as a means for commoditisation and commodification for their own socio-political and economic gain. Consequently, the religious and spiritual values of pilgrims are exchanged for commodification, transforming spiritual experiences into something more touristic.

It may be argued, then, that pilgrims participating in the Hajj are increasingly motivated to engage in touristic behaviour, driven by their own materialistic desires which are encouraged and supported by the ongoing commodification of the Hajj. Thus, overall, the outcomes of the research suggest that there are no compelling reasons to argue that Hajj remains an authentic religious ritual based on Islamic ideology. Particularly, the evidence suggests that the pilgrim's spiritual experience is becoming diluted. In common with other manifestations of religious tourism, increasingly adopts what has been referred to as the 'touristic characteristic of pilgrimage' (see Vukonic, 1996, 2000).

In simple words, the religious elements of the Hajj have come to be increasingly dominated by its touristic elements; encouraging pilgrims sometimes behave like tourists as they follow their desires for of materialistic consumption, in so doing of exchanging a spiritual experience for a more touristic experience.

According to R41:

> Look, Hajj is almost like same which was at the time of Prophet (PBUH), but the pilgrims have changed, their behaviour has changed, their social and economic demands have changed, and their ideologies regarding religion have been fragmented. Before, Hajj was not business, not commercialised; before, Haji has more respect than current Haji because before, when you go to Hajj, people thought that there is less probability that you will come back alive due to

long distances and hardship. And now Hajj is like that you are going to another country as normal, no big deal. Before, governments take it very seriously; religiously now it has become tourism, so Hajj rites are same but picture has changed. Look you are doing PHD and sometimes you are calling pilgrims tourist because this is happening, anybody can see this with bare-eye, nobody thought in the past that one day this will happen to pilgrims, good you are bringing truth in front of the world.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

The overall purpose of this thesis has been to appraise critically the extent to which, as a result of contemporary commodification processes, the spiritual experience of Islamic pilgrims on the Hajj is being transformed into one that is more touristic. More precisely, it has sought to identify, within an understanding of the traditional role and significance of Mecca and the Hajj in Islam, how pilgrims or religious tourists to Mecca perceive and respond to the contemporary commodification of the holy city and the Hajj, how this impacts upon their religious experience, and whether different individuals or groups of pilgrims respond to this commodification in different ways.

The purpose of this final, concluding chapter is to consider how and to what extent the specific aims and objectives of this research, as established in Chapter One, have been met, these objectives being:

i. To consider the significance of holy city of Mecca and the spiritual ritual of Hajj.
ii. To assess critically the contemporary commodification of the Hajj and the Holy destination of Mecca.
iii. To evaluate how pilgrims perceive the role of contemporary tourism commodities in Mecca, such as the modern hospitality, tourism infrastructure and technology.
iv. To appraise critically whether such materialistic commodification transforms the pilgrim's spiritual experience into a touristic experience.
v. To identify the extent to which pilgrims' experiences are influenced by their different cultural backgrounds.
vi. To explore whether luxury religious tourism commodification contributes to the emergence of distinctive segments within the pilgrimage market.

Each of these objectives is now considered in relation to the outcomes of the research.

7.1 The significance of holy city of Mecca and the spiritual ritual of Hajj.

On the basis of secondary data sources and the primary research, it is evident that Mecca's historical and religious-cultural significance lies in the completion of the religious tasks given by Allah to Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) and the fundamental foundations of the fifth pillar of an Islamic pilgrimage, religious tourism journey – the Hajj. More specifically, Mecca is known, first, as the birth place of the last Prophet of Islam Mohammad (PBHU), second, for the compilation of the Holy Book of Quran and, third, for the commencement of Islam. The Kaaba, as a sacred building in Mecca, is also a symbol of the direction for prayers five times a day and for circumambulation during Hajj and Umrah. The Hajj in Mecca offers Muslims the opportunity to experience the spiritual awareness of the real importance of their lives on earth and after death. The Hajj is the mandatory journey that every adult Muslim must undertake at least once in a lifetime if they can afford it financially and physically. The motivation of movement and the teachings of the Prophets Ibrahim and Mohammad (PBUH) are behind this religious festival in Mecca, which makes Mecca the capital of the Islamic world and the hub of Islamic religious tourism.

The research indicated that, while performing the Hajj, the pilgrim wears special clothes (Ihram) that clearly distinguishes a pilgrim from a commercial tourist. During the Hajj, pilgrims worship and renew their sense of purpose in the world by removing all markers of social status, wealth and pride in search of spiritual experience. After performing the Hajj, the pilgrim acquires the sacred designation 'Haji', is then used as a first name, providing a sense of pride that emanates from this spiritual designation.

At the same time, however, the research also revealed that the pilgrimage journey is one means by which destinations or governments may seek to gain economic advantage through its commercial exploitation. This, in turn, suggests that the commodification of the holy destination and the ritual becomes inevitable. Hence the second objective of the research was to consider the contemporary commodification of Mecca and the Hajj.

7.2 The contemporary commodification of the Hajj and the holy destination of Mecca

In contrast to the traditional significance and meaning of Mecca and the Hajj as revealed through Objective One, the general consensus emerging from the research was that the spiritual ritual of Hajj and the holy destination of Mecca have become the victim of commodification, commoditisation, commercialisation and marketization. Specifically, the thesis has demonstrated that owing to a combination of a continuing

increase in the number of pilgrims and the decline in the oil industry, the Saudi government has invested heavily in the tourism sector with the aim of developing and modernising the religious tourism, transport and hospitality services and infrastructure, as well as telecom infrastructure. Broadly, this has resulted in the commodification of Mecca, religious tourism in general and the ritual of the Hajj in particular.

In more detail, the research shows that the high demand for religious tourism to Mecca has revolutionised the domestic investment market, the ever-increasing number of domestic and international religious tourist / pilgrims arrivals stimulating an extraordinary upsurge in government projects both in relation to capacity and exchanged values. At the same time, the hospitality industry in Saudi Arabia now offers an incomparable opportunity for international companies and investors to benefit from the hospitality, tourism and telecom sectors, thereby enlarging their share of the prosperous religious tourism market. Indeed, as discussed in this thesis, there are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world; thus, with Mecca's current capacity to accommodate 3 to 4 million pilgrims during the Hajj, any increase in costs is unlikely to have impact on demand. Putting it another way, as the demand for religious tourism to Saudi Arabia continues to rise (Islam is a widely-practised global religion, with the numbers of followers increasing to the extent that it will become the world's dominant religion by 2030), not only new market capacity will be utilised but also, given the uniqueness of Mecca and of the Hajj as a religious ritual, the religious tourism sector is unlikely to be affected by economic recession.

Pilgrims can now purchase a Hajj tour package from a minimum of one to two weeks up to four weeks. Thus, the investment in the hospitality, tourism and telecom infrastructure has escalated the capacity of the Mecca, potentially fuelling future growth in inbound religious tourism and consequently the income generated by the hospitality and tourism sector. The revenue spent by pilgrims produces income for both the private and public sectors, generated by sources such as salaries, wages, rent, taxes, tour packages, Hajj agent license fees, transports, Hajj guides fees and so on. The flow of revenue then increases as it passes through different sectors of the economy and eventually contributed in Saudi Gross Domestic Product. In short, the commodification of religious tourism in Mecca has supported the growing economic base of the contemporary hospitality, tourism and telecom industries in Saudi Arabia.

The commodification and modernisation of Mecca reflects an emphasis on attracting the niche branded pilgrim market rather than non-branded economy class pilgrims, for the reason that as one 'branded' pilgrim spends two to three times as much as an

economy class pilgrim. Thus, the research suggests that the Hajj is in jeopardy of becoming a rich man's religious ritual; indeed, some respondents predicted that if the rate of the commodification of the Hajj and Mecca is maintained, within five to ten years the Hajj will become the preserve of the wealthy.

Overall, then, the research indicates that, on the one hand, the commodification of the Hajj and Mecca has brought growth to the Saudi economy but, on the other hand, has enhanced the demand for material commodities among pilgrims, potentially impacting upon the spiritual experience of pilgrims.

7.3 Pilgrims' perceptions regarding the role of contemporary tourism commodities in Mecca.

The research identified that, currently, there are broadly two types of pilgrims that can be found undertaking the Hajj: first, Modernist (branded) pilgrims whose views reflect modern ideas and concepts and who originate mostly, but not entirely, from western countries; and second, Traditionalist (non-branded) pilgrims who believe in resisting change. The latter group includes pilgrims from the western world but mostly originate from Asian and African countries.

The research revealed the following characteristics of the Modernist pilgrim:

- Media conscious
- Mostly performing the Hajj for the first time
- In a good financial position
- A belief in modern infrastructure
- Sees a need to maintain the balance between religion and the modern world
- A belief in modern commodities
- A desire to maintain living standards
- Recognising and accepting the reality of modern society
- The authenticity of the Hajj and Mecca is loosely connected with religious cultural heritage sites
- A belief that culture is not static
- Brand conscious
- In support of progress (e.g. scientific)
- More likely to be young to middle-aged
- More likely to have a 'worldly' rather than religious education.
- Mostly lives under a western cultural influence

- Views the commodification of the Hajj and Mecca as a demand of the globalised world
- Limited concern for future generations of pilgrims
- A belief that the Hajj occurs in Saudi Arabia so they can take advantage of it
- A belief that the Hajj will never end
- A belief that religion and world should move together
- A belief that spirituality has modern dynamics
- A belief that religious sects' interpretations are sometimes are important

From the research it is evident that, overall, the increasing focus on brands, luxuries and SMART technologies is controversial. However, Modernist (branded) pilgrims perceive that the development of star-ranked hotels, fast-food outlets, shopping malls and the provision of SMT services signify the beginning of a modern era of Islam. As a consequence, they are less concerned that much of Mecca's ancient history has been demolished to make room for these modern structures. They also believe that, owing to the availability of these luxuries and facilities, performing the Hajj are now far easier than in the past. Whereas previously, the Hajj was an experience of hardship, for the Modernist pilgrim it is a comfortable experience; it has become expensive, but the price must be paid for a 'comfortable and luxury Hajj'.

Furthermore, for Modernist pilgrims who purchase a Hajj package similar to a holiday package, the spiritual experience becomes related to or dependent on the type of package purchased. With different packages available, from economy to deluxe to VVIP, the issue has not how easy or difficult it is to perform the Hajj, but how much one can spend. Thus, for these pilgrims, enjoying a luxury Hajj is not against Islamic values; after all it is Allah who blessed them with the monetary power, and the Hajj is one of the best ways to spend money in the name of Allah.

The research also revealed that, for Modernist pilgrims, performing the Hajj in the tradition of simplicity are almost impossible, especially for those from the west who feel unable to sacrifice their normal, day-to-day lifestyle and, hence, prefer a more luxury, star-rated Hajj. Specifically, the western lives of Modernist pilgrims are dominated by brands, high living standards and high disposable incomes. They claim that unlike the prophet and his companions, who had very strong faith in Allah, they live in a materialistic world with materialistic demands and their faiths are weaker. In addition, the Modernist pilgrim is characterised by an addiction to SMART modern information technologies during the Hajj. Not only is this anticipatory, in as much as they buy Hajj packages online, inspired by travel agents' on-line Hajj advertisements, but it is also

reflective in the sense that they take and share selfies and other photographs on social networking websites, updating their journey experience and sharing their views with friends and relatives, and enjoying the feedback about their on-going travel experiences.

Overall, then it can be argued that, at least for Modernist, branded pilgrims, the Hajj, which was traditionally undertaken to learn survival and determination in the pursuit of higher meaning, has become more an exercise of convenience; it has become a blend of branded luxury and spiritual experience based on an ideology of comfort and ease Hajj at the expense of the traditional lessons of the Hajj. Moreover, whereas the Hajj was once considered to be the binding force of all Muslims, commodification is now resulting in the differentiation of pilgrims, between rich and poor. Specifically, the research revealed divisions, evident throughout the pilgrimage journey, amongst pilgrims on the basis of their financial status.

In contrast, the Traditionalist pilgrim (non-branded) identified in the research may be characterised as:

- Media conscious but with a flexible approach
- Mostly performing the Hajj for at least a second time
- Enjoying an average, fair or good financial position
- A belief in cultural religious historical infrastructure
- Claims that religion is superior to the material world
- A belief in facilities not luxury commodities
- A partial belief in maintaining living standards back home or in Hajj
- A belief only in religious reality
- A belief that the authenticity of religious rituals and the destination is connected to religious cultural heritage sites
- A belief in religious culture is static
- Partially brand conscious
- A partial belief in the modern world
- A belief in separating science from religious events
- More likely to be middle age and older
- Likely to have had a higher religious education in addition to 'worldly' education.
- Likely to be living according to Islamic cultural influences
- Views the commodification of the Hajj and Mecca in a negative sense
- Concern for future generations of pilgrims

- A belief that although the Hajj occurs in Saudi Arabia, it is not their 'property'.
- A belief in Hajj will never end
- A belief that spirituality is only connected with religion
- A belief that religious sects' interpretations are important

The research yielded some interesting yet seemingly contradictory results in the case of Traditionalist (non-branded) pilgrims. Indeed, it emerged from the research that although this group of pilgrims is generally critical of the role of contemporary commodities in the Hajj, they are nevertheless involved in consuming them or they revealed the desire to consume them, directly or indirectly. They separated modern commodities of the Hajj into in two categories: firstly 'facilities', such as transport and the Hajj e- bracelet, which are deemed necessary and hence acceptable; and second, 'luxuries', such as 5-star hotel or the luxury tents in Arafat and Mina, which are unacceptable because, in the view of these pilgrims, they are polluting the spiritual experience and increasing the touristic approach of those participating in the Hajj.

At the same time, however, the research revealed that despite their criticism of such luxuries, the Traditionalist pilgrims admitted to having the desire to be able to consume them, though subject to their financial resources. For instance, during the interviews, many Traditionalist pilgrims expressed an interest in staying in a star-ranked hotel and experiencing its materialistic amenities at least once. On the one hand, it could be argued that this interest simply reflects these pilgrims' home countries and lifestyles, where access to such luxury is rare. On the other hand, these pilgrims were clearly impressed by these luxuries, increasing their desire to experience them. It was also evident that, similar to Modernist pilgrims, the Traditionalist is equally involved in the use of SMART media technologies during the Hajj.

Another interesting finding was that most of the Traditionalist pilgrims were undertaking the Hajj on different government (as oppose to private package) schemes, yet they were not satisfied with facilities provided by these governments. Some indicated that, if they could afford it, they would try to upgrade their package during the Hajj, although this could be very expensive, or if they were to participate in the Hajj again in the future, they would buy a higher quality package from a private Hajj tour operator. At the same time, however, these pilgrims maintained their criticism of the modern commodification of Mecca, suggesting as a solution that the luxury, high-rise hotels should be replaced with standardised accommodation with none of the buildings higher than the house of Allah so that the lessons of the Hajj could be observed and so that

spiritualty and religion can walk side by side. For the Traditionalist pilgrims, there is no such thing as modern spirituality or modern religion, as suggested by Modernist pilgrims. It was also observed that Traditionalist pilgrims were less obsessed with branded shopping, focusing instead on buying traditional products such as simple prayer mats and dates; they claimed that even though they had money, they would not spend it on unnecessary branded commodities.

Perhaps one of the main differences identified in the research between Traditionalist and Modernist pilgrims lies in attitudes towards the loss of religious cultural heritage sites which have been demolished to make way for the modernisation of Mecca. Unlike Modernists, the Traditionalists believed that this was a sign of the Hajj being transformed into a business, diluting the spiritual experience of pilgrims and laying the foundations for the Hajj becoming a touristic experience. Indeed, the general perception of the commodification of Mecca among Traditionalist pilgrims was that the city's archaeological heritage has suffered from a construction mania supported by hard-line Wahhabi clerics who preach against the conservation of Islamic cultural heritage. Consequently, the city has been commodified, commoditised, commercialised and marketed, transforming, according to Traditionalist pilgrims, their experiences into like I am walking in New York.

Overall, then, from the perspective of Traditionalist pilgrims, commodification and the growing disparity between poor and rich is challenging the values of equality and simplicity commanded by Islam. More specifically, the research suggests that, for Traditionalists, commodification is diluting the spiritual experience and sowing the seed of materialism in the religious attitudes of pilgrims, regardless of their financial status. Consequently, the Traditionalist position is that t there is a need to reclaim the Hajj from the control of commodification.

Then, the research revealed opposing viewpoints. On the one hand, Modernist pilgrims claim that contemporary tourism commodities supporting their Hajj journey whereas, on the other hand, Traditionalists criticise the contemporary tourism commodities of the Hajj. In order to consider which group is most impacted in terms of their spiritual experience, conclusions can be drawn from the outcomes of the fourth objective of this thesis, as discussed in the next section.

7.4 Whether such materialistic commodification transforms the pilgrim's spiritual experience into a touristic experience.

Throughout this research, it has become evident that, through the development of modern large-scale star-rated hotels and shopping malls in Mecca, and the provision of luxury amenities and services in locations such as Arafat and in Mina, of luxury, rapid transport services, and the widespread availability of SMART technology and services, the emphasis is increasingly being placed on ensuring that participants in the Hajj can enjoy a more comfortable spiritual experience through the various stages of their pilgrimage journey.

As also discussed in this thesis, as a journey often described a voyage of faith and even asceticism, pilgrimage has long served as a mechanism for travel and tourism as well as well as for faith. In short, the religious traveller might be part pilgrim, part tourist, a dichotomy identified by Smith (1992). Thus, a pilgrimage may offer participants not only the opportunity as to express their faith and engage in religious rituals, but also to benefit from more relaxing or hedonistic experiences provided by contemporary tourism and hospitality services and amenities, the implication being that the greater the availability and variety of such services and amenities, the more likely it is that pilgrimage takes on the characteristics of a touristic journey.

The evidence from this research reveals that, at least in the case of the Hajj, whilst modernisation and commodification has undoubtedly played a role in increasing the number of pilgrims participating in it, it has also encouraged more materialistic behaviour and desires amongst most, if not all, pilgrims. Hence, the shift in emphasis towards commodification and consumerism as revealed in this research leads to the inevitable conclusion that the pilgrim experience is also shifting towards one that is increasingly a touristic experience. In essence, the research has revealed that participants in the Hajj are increasingly confronted by commodification, commoditisation, and commercialisation, as a result of which, the element of spirituality in the lives of pilgrims on the Hajj is diminishing and being overtaken by the purposeful desire for or consumption of touristic experiences.

7.5 Pilgrims' experiences are influenced by their different cultural backgrounds

During the research undertaken at Stage Two and during the Hajj in 2016, interviews were undertaken with pilgrims of more than twenty different ethnic backgrounds, representing a mix of both developed and developing countries. Amongst these, those identified as Modernist pilgrims almost entirely originated from developed, western countries, and their spiritual experience of the Hajj was found to be defined by their

consumption of modern commodities which, in turn, reflects their contemporary western cultural backgrounds. Specifically, in their home culture, Modernist pilgrims are exposed to contemporary world commodities to a much greater extent than Traditionalist pilgrims, many of whom originated from poor- to middle-income developing countries. Indeed, those pilgrims from developed western countries typically enjoyed home lifestyles based upon higher disposable incomes and higher living standards and, generally, a more materialist approach to their lives than Traditionalists. It was not surprising, therefore, to discover through the research that it was primarily the Modernist pilgrims who participated in the Hajj by way of higher-rated, luxury Hajj packages, compared with Traditionalists who were more typically performing the Hajj on government quota budget schemes. The research also revealed that although observance of Islam as a religion is on the increase in the West, the younger generations of Modernist pilgrims concentrate more on acquiring a modern rather than Islamic education as this is perceived to leading better earning potential. However, this has also contributed to a weaker religiosity and more materialistic approach to life. Overall, then, from the results of the research it can be argued that, as a result of their cultural background, not only are Modernist pilgrims less concerned about the lack of authentic religious cultural heritage in the cities – implying that they view modern Mecca as authentic – but also that their spiritual experience is to a great extent defined or satisfied by the comforts of tourism. In short, their spiritual experience is at the same time a touristic experience.

In contrast, Traditionalist pilgrims seek a spiritual experience based upon the more traditional meaning and significance of the Hajj, yet that experience is diluted (or perhaps they are increasingly prevented from enjoying such an experience) by the commodification of Mecca and the Hajj. In that respect, the experiences of Traditionalist pilgrims from non-Western cultural backgrounds may potentially be less satisfying, not least because, somewhat ironically, Traditionalist pilgrims were found to aspire to the material comforts being enjoyed by their Modernist counterparts. And of course, as previously discussed, all, pilgrims, irrespective of cultural background, were found to be increasingly engrossed in the use of smartphones and other technological equipment and services which, as the research revealed, further intruded on the spiritual dimension of the Hajj.

Consequently, it can be concluded that, from the evidence in this research, when religious tourism is commodified through contemporary markets or through globalisation, religious tourists or pilgrims, irrespective of cultural background, adapt to the changes resulting from that commodification. To be specific, the experience of all

pilgrims is influenced by commodification; for some (Modernist) pilgrims, it is out of a desire to enjoy an easy, comfortable Hajj-based on the consumption of luxury services and facilities with which they are familiar, whilst for others (Traditionalist) it is partly of necessity and partly out of an aspiration to enjoy a commodified lifestyle with which they are less familiar. Either way, the experience of the Hajj is determined by a growing enthusiasm and, indeed, necessity to consume contemporary commodities as this has become the principal means of gaining access to and participating in the Hajj.

7.6 Whether luxury religious tourism commodification contributes to the emergence of distinctive segments within the pilgrimage market.

The final research objective was concerned with exploring the extent to which luxury religious tourism commodification is contributing to the emergence of distinctive segments within the pilgrimage market. It is not surprising that, from the preceding discussions in this thesis, the commodification of Mecca and the Hajj is creating distinct luxury tourist-pilgrim commodified market segments or different social and market identities. As this research has revealed, these can be broadly located under the headings of, on the one hand, 'branded pilgrims' and, on the other hand, 'non-branded' pilgrims.

More specifically, the research reveals that the luxury commodification of religious tourism is increasing the financial and social distinction between both pilgrim segments but, interestingly, simultaneously increasing the desire to experience such luxury and comfort even amongst the non-branded pilgrims market segment. This, in turn, suggests that religion and its rituals have become more a market of commodities, and less a spiritual mandate.

This finding that commodification has brought about the creation of market segments points, in fact, to an overall conclusion that can be drawn from this thesis, as considered in the next section.

7.7 Conclusion: has the Hajj become a commodified tourist experience?

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the overall aim of this thesis was to address the question: to appraise critically the extent to which, as a result of the contemporary commodification processes, the spiritual experience of Islamic pilgrims on the Hajj is being transformed into a more touristic one.

From the discussion of the research outcomes in Chapter Six and the review of the research objectives in the sections above, it can be concluded that the Hajj is, indeed,

being transformed into a commodified touristic experience, not only tangibly in terms of the modernisation of Mecca and the increasing availability of luxury services and amenities 'on the ground' which are combined into touristic-like packages of varying degrees of luxury, but also intangibly in the desired experience of pilgrims themselves.

In short, traditionally the Hajj transcending ethnic and financial backgrounds; it was a ritual revolving around the same dress code, the same rituals, and the same devotion to same faith amongst participants. However, nowadays, wealthier (branded) pilgrims may secure a front seat at the Hajj, staying in a 5-star hotel literally on the marble of the Grand Mosque, enjoying a luxury experience and not even straying from their hotel for prayers. Conversely, for less wealthy (non-branded) pilgrims, the experience is more challenging; their accommodation is a long distance from the Grand Mosque and hence they are obliged to spend the whole day on the inside and outside of the Grand Mosque, eating sometimes once a day. Consequently, the materialistic desire to consume and experience an 'easy' Hajj, as experienced by the branded pilgrim, emerges amongst less wealth, more traditional pilgrims.

At the same time, it is evident from the research that the commodification of Mecca and the Hajj reflects the positive decision on the part of the Saudi government and religious groups to exploit their own religious sites and rituals for financial gain. The conscious decision has been made, in effect, to transform the Hajj into a (religious) tourism product and experience. To participate in the Hajj is now to engage in a variety of commercial transactions, the varying cost of which determines the level of ease and comfort enjoyed by pilgrims (or customers?), in a process not dissimilar to the consumption of tourism more generally. Hence, the spiritual experience is being challenged and diluted by commodification and the desire on the part of pilgrims to consume such a commodified experience. In short, the Hajj is, through a variety of inter-related, processes becoming a touristic experience.

7.8 Contribution to Knowledge

As noted in the introductory chapter and revealed in the literature review section of this thesis, religious tourism and pilgrimage has in recent years attracted increasing academic attention, perhaps reflecting the growing recognition of the significant scope and value of religious tourism as a sector of the overall global tourism market. Nevertheless, as also suggested in Chapter One, a number of gaps remain in that literature, particularly with respect to the consequences of the commodification of religious tourism and pilgrimage on the spiritual experience of tourists and pilgrims. Focusing specifically on Islamic religious tourism in the context of the Hajj, this thesis

has addressed this gap in knowledge, in so doing making a number of contributions. First and foremost, it makes an original contribution through the research undertaken amongst pilgrims whilst actually participating in the Hajj; this 'live' perspective adds an original, in-depth and nuanced contribution to knowledge and understanding of the dynamic experience of one of the world's major religious tourism events.

Second, it uniquely explores the relationship between commodification, authenticity and the spiritual experiences of religious tourists participating in the context of a major pilgrimage. In so doing, it makes a significant, empirical-research based contribution to knowledge, building on and confirming conceptual arguments in the literature that, in the case of the Hajj at least, a causal relationship exists between commodification, perceptions of authenticity and resultant (religious) tourist experiences.

Third, it makes an original contribution to knowledge through exploring Islamic religious tourism in the context of the Hajj, in so doing offering empirical evidence to support the assertion that, as an increasingly significant sector of the overall tourism market, religious tourism is exploited for economic gain by destinations and that, as a consequence, the spiritual significance of religious tourism may sometimes, but not always, be diminished.
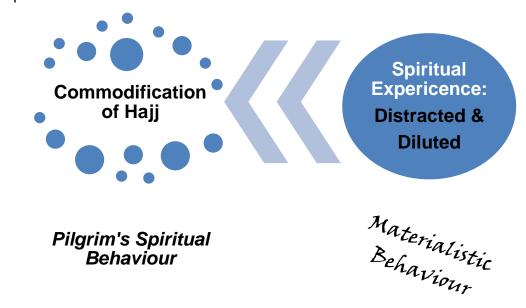
Fourth, this thesis has provided a unique insight into the dynamic nature of the contemporary Hajj and, in particular, the development and commodification of Mecca.

And last but not least, this research validates the following Hadith given by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) some twenty centuries ago, which predicts a transformation in the meaning of the Hajj and, in particular, its commodification.

يحِجُّ أغْنِياءُ أُمّتِي للنّزهَةِ ويحِجُّ أوسَاطُها للتّجَارَةِ ويحِجُّ فُقَراؤُهُم للرّياءِ والسُّمعَةِ، فعِنْدَها يكُونُ أقوامٌ يَتَعلّمُونَ القُرآنَ لِغير اللهِ ويتّخِذُونَهُ مَزامِيرَ، ويكونُ أقوامٌ يَتفقّهونَ لِغير اللهِ.

Near the time Judgement Day, the rich ones from amongst my people will perform Hajj for the sake of travel and holidays. The middle class will perform Hajj for commercial purposes, thereby transporting goods from here to there while bringing commercial goods from there to here. The scholars will perform Hajj for the sake of show and fame. The poor will perform Hajj for the purpose of begging (Tafsir al-Mizan, 1995: 434) & (Raj & Bozonelos, 2015:40).

Taking above contributions in an account, there is overwhelming evidence corroborating the notion that the intense commodification of the Hajj is having a negative impact on the spiritual experience of pilgrim both objectively and subjectively Figure 7.1 below conceptualises the contemporary environment of the Hajj and the relationship between its commodification and the pilgrim's spiritual experience. Specifically, the pilgrim's spiritual behaviour is becoming materialistic, consequently, distracting and diluting the spiritual experience.

Figure 7.1: Contemporary commodified environment of Hajj and the pilgrim's experience

Source: Author

7.9 Future Research

Despite the contributions, outlined above, that this thesis makes, it also points to possible future avenues of research. For example, this research has explored commodification in the context of the Hajj; it would be logical to suggest that similar research is undertaken at other major religious events or rituals, amongst those undertaking the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella, (the Camino de Santiago) or during the Arbaeen pilgrimage to Karbala in Iraq which, though less well-known than the Hajj, is significantly larger in terms of numbers of participants.

More generally, the literature on religious tourism might benefit from research that explores the commodification of religious journeys, events and destinations from different theological / religious perspectives; are different religions more or less

accepting of commodification, or are there specific circumstances in which commodification is more prevalent or acceptable than others. At the same time, future research might fruitfully adopt an event / destination management perspective, exploring the extent to which the commodification of religious events, rituals or destinations may be restricted or controlled or, conversely, if it is an inevitable (and, perhaps, necessary) process to enable such events or places to continue to attract religious tourists in an increasingly competitive and commercially-focused market.

7.10 Limitations of the research

This research suffers, perhaps inevitably, a number of limitations. First, researching academic concepts in the 'real world' of the Hajj was challenging as some of those concepts, or terminologies, were difficult for respondents, to comprehend. For instance, the fundamental (to this thesis) notion / term of 'commodification' was unfamiliar to many of the research participant and other pilgrims; they were more familiar with more everyday concepts such as 'commercialisation' 'business' 'economics' or 'marketing'. Hence, those participants who did not entirely understand a terminology or a question may have unintentionally misrepresented their ideas and opinions. Nevertheless, attempts were made to address the possibility of falsification through asking additional explanation questions, re-phrasing questions in more simple language or conversing, if possible, with participants own language.

Second, some participants demonstrated some unwillingness to discuss certain issues related to, for example, religion or the impact of commodification on the pilgrim/tourist experiences, or indeed their own spiritual experiences, issues, which they considered private. This unwillingness determined to some extent the configuration of the sample in this research. At the same time, there is the perception (which to some extent is valid) that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia displays some of the characteristics of a police state; hence, some participants perceived it to be dangerous to express their true opinions or perceptions during the interviews.

And third, the qualitative methodology and phenomenological inevitably had some influence on the researcher's association with participants. Every attempt was made to observe respondents' answers precisely and objectively yet the interaction between respondents and the researcher may have resulted in some interviewer response bias, thus potentially impacting on the generalisability of results.

7.11 Final thoughts … My PhD journey

Undertaking this PhD has been a significant journey for me, in two ways. First, as a researcher, it has been an educational journey, exploring the literature, developing my ideas and my leaning skills, facing the challenges of undertaking the research in Saudi Arabia and, indeed, maintaining my role as an objective researcher when confronted with topics and arguments that challenged my personal religious convictions. Now nearing the end of that journey, I realise how much I have learned, how much I have developed as both an individual and as an academic researcher; I have come to recognise my strengths and my limitations. At the same time, this PhD has literally, been a journey, given that I undertook most of the empirical research during my own participation (for a third time) in the Hajj. Doing so in the role of a researcher was a new experience, a learning experience that offered new insights into the Hajj. Rather than viewing it as a personal experience, I came to understand it also from a wider perspective, enjoying the privileged position of both being part of the Hajj and also, in a sense, looking in from outside. The opportunity to think critically about contemporary Mecca, to learn about other pilgrims' perceptions about the modernism of Hajj, and to discuss with them their varying experiences based on their socio-cultural backgrounds was not only an exceptional experience for me, but prompted me to think about my own life and role as a Muslim.

During this PhD journey, I have been fortunate to participate in a number of international conferences and I have also had opportunity to publish some of my research with other academics. They have contributed in no small measure to my learning and enjoyment. And overall, the PhD has been an amazing experience, in terms of both helping me progress in my professional life and building my academic, social and professional networks. I have enjoyed every element of the three years that I studied full-time for my PhD and would like to personally thank all those in the University of Central Lancashire team who not only made this academic journey possible, but also supported me throughout it.

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Appendix 1: Stage One Documents

Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet for Focus Group in UK

Example of Focus Group Transcript

CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Spiritual or Tourist Experience? A critical exploration of the consequences of the commodification of the Hajj on the pilgrim experience.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Researcher contact information:
Jahanzeeb Qurashi
Candidate of PhD, the School of Management
University of Central Lancashire
jqurashi@uclan.ac.uk
Tel: 07459181571

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet, dated ………….. for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

☐

I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

☐

Please tick box

	Yes	No
I agree to the focus group / interview being audio recorded	☐	☐
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	☐	☐

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

Stage (ONE)

PARTICIPANT SHEET NO: 1 FOR FOCUS GROUP IN UK

<u>1) Participant Information Sheet for Focus Group in UK</u>

Title of Study: Spiritual or Tourist Experience? A critical exploration of the consequences of the commodification of the Hajj on the pilgrim experience.

<u>Researcher contact information:</u>

Jahanzeeb Qurashi
Candidate of PhD, the School of Management
University of Central Lancashire
jqurashi@uclan.ac.uk
Tel: 07459181571

What is the study about?

I am investigating the impact of commodification on Mecca and Hajj (Saudi Arabia), also how it transforms spiritual experience of pilgrim in to more touristic experience.

What will you need to do?

I am asking you to take part in the research focus group interview to discuss topics regarding commodification of destination, ritual, authenticity of religious journey and spiritual & touristic experiences of the journey.

How will the information be used?

The recording will be transcribed (written down) by the researcher and will not be played to anyone else and remain confidential. (Reference to anonymity removes to avoid ambiguity).

Any information collected during the focus groups will only be used for research, including research articles and conference presentations but your name will not be used and no one will be able to identify you from the information.

What if you agree to the research but then change your mind?

You are allowed to do so, you can change your mind at any point, before, during or after, and the material will be deleted or destroyed.

What will you get from this?

This is an opportunity for you to be involved in a piece of research and you may find the process itself very interesting. The interviews will give you a chance to think about the way you interpret, present contemporary development in Mecca and its impact on the Hajj and pilgrim's spiritual experience. I will also be happy to pass on the completed research article and a copy of the completed PHD research once it has been produced.

You will need to be aged over 18 and sign the consent form in order to be able to take part in the study.

Focus Group Transcript

Interviewer (I): Aslam-O-Alikum every one, thanks for coming here to contribute in this research, thanks for signing the consent forms, if you have any question regarding consent form or about your privacy or about the anything related to this Focus group interview please do not feel hesitation and feel free to ask.

After the interview please do not leave as I have arranged some light lunch for all the participants. So do we have any question, no, ok, let's start.

Total six (1-6) **Respondents (R)** had participated, and they will be called in Interview **(R1-R6) and researcher will be known as 'Interviewee' or 'I'.**

Interviewee: Let's start with the name of Allah

I: Is Hajj is expensive now? (R3)

R3:

>   Indeed, Hajj is expensive now.

I: How? R3

R3:

>   In the beginning when my brother went to Hajj in 2009, they did Hajj in £800, when I went to Hajj in 2014 I spend £4000, it was a normal Hajj not VIP, and therefore it is expensive.

I: What are the reasons of expensiveness in your opinion?

R1:

>   I want to respond to this question.

I: Why not please.

R1:

>   why it is getting expensive there are lot of reasons behind it, one of them is the difference of currency value, but particularly in my opinion the people who are living in England or in Pakistan they made and take Hajj as business.

I: Which people you are talking about?

R1:

>   First of all Hajj tour operators, because in the beginning in 1980's when people go from here there was no Hajj group system, people go on individual basis, take their own visa from Saudi embassy and go straight away, no hotel booking nothing, very simple process, then there is a trend in the west now you can find it everywhere, now everything on the name of facilitation become business, they provide you extra services, and every day they are introducing new glittery services in it, some of them are necessary but majority are not, like this they sell their products, and that is why Hajj is getting expensive. This is one of the main

reasons to me. When group system started, actually it was Saudi behind this, they have given the concept of business in Hajj, if Saudi didn't encourage it as business it will never ever become a business, People perform Hajj in a same manner as they were doing since centuries. Saudi King with the collaboration of Saudi Ministry of Hajj have given it a new shape and converted it in a business.

I: Why Saudi Arabia thought like this, it is a very rich country?

R2:

Before I answer I want to elaborate on the previous question.

I: Yes

R2:

I have heard all the honourable participants, on contrary I want to say Hajj is not only expensive due to what my honourable participants said, I think look at the rate of meat and other food, it not same as it was ten years ago, before the air ticket was £200 not it is £900 for Pakistan, there is no Hajj there but it is expensive, why because any commodity when it getting expensive it will put impact on other goods, now secondly, I want to talk about convenience, you buy one bottle of water from ASDA that will cost you a pound and if you buy same bottle from patrol station mini mall it cost you £2, therefore it is a matter of convenience, the human do not want to give themselves a pain so they prefer to buy £2 bottle because might be Asda is far from him, similarly a person who has arranged the Hajj Visa services, hotel, Air ticket, Transportation etc. under one roof so he is giving convenience to people, rather you go to several shops you can buy everything under one roof and secondly the person who is offering this convenience he has also family to feed and meet the business expenditure so certainly he must earn money from these services. I think Hajj is same as it was before but due to services and facilities as they are not free of charge so obviously the pilgrim has to bare that. Before 20 years when people were performing Hajj they take water with them from Mecca to Arafat, Mina, Muzdelifa as at that time there was no water there at that time, also they were holding stoves and other food items with them because at that time no food was available there, but now these things are available there and turn in to the shape of Industry because the pilgrims can take services and advantages from them, so the pilgrims have no tension during Hajj and fulfil their aim nicely, which is Hajj and Allah's worship. Otherwise if these facilities are not there when they get up in the morning they think where is the water, where is the donkey and camel carriage, how we manage tents, to eliminate these problems there are expenditures. Therefore, the Saudi government like other is government of the world, no doubt Allah bless them with lots of facilities, so their Ministers told government facilitate the pilgrims as well, yes you cannot ruled out that there are some industrial missions are involve in it but we can blame everything on the Saudi government that they take is as a business now. Let me tell something Hajj is not business from now it was a business existing since centuries, even before Islam it was a business of Mecca.

I: Before it was said that the pilgrims are 'Guest of Allah' Mecca residents used to invite pilgrims to stay in their houses free of charge, my question is why Saudi never thought

20 years ago to build hotels and facilitate pilgrims why now, even 30 years ago they were very rich, why suddenly the facilities are coming to Mecca and Madinah, why Mecca is now converting into very modern city?

R2:

> In my opinion, I can be wrong as well, look before 50000 pilgrims come to Hajj and now 5 million so the demand encouraged needs and wants, look Saudi like other countries has also day to day expenditures of their country, they have health system, road system and they also need to take care of their citizens as well, so to fulfil their country's responsibilities they called lot of companies to invest in Hajj operations and yes they are earning millions and billions from it, off course there are gaps but they are in learning process and day by day they are improving or filling up those gaps, I think they are doing their best and there is no problem with it.

I: R4 you have performed Hajj in 1970's and recently as well, how do you compare both experiences?

R4:

> In 1970 there was only one road here, now they have 2 to 3 roads and now it is one way traffic, this is a good facility. But on a sad note on the cost heritage places I been in 1970 it is no more existing there anymore, this is due to modernisation. But I like now the facility of Devils bridges it good now, less accidents are happening now. But accidents are still happening even now, no matter how many facilities you give. When I perform Hajj in 1970 it was very simple, people respect pilgrims a lot, they say truth now they are lying, everybody want to make money from pilgrims. Before there were no hotels here you feel very fresh now due to these buildings I feel suffocated. When I performed my first Hajj in early 1970, at that time KSA never consider Hajj as a business or Tourism and always accept pilgrims as the 'Guest of Allah'. There was no mandatory concept of buying a Hajj package or going in a group, it was simple and easy; though claiming at that time Hajj was not in too much demand, is not correct. I have really enjoyed and remember that Hajj from religiously, spiritually and authenticity perspective. However, now Mecca is full of New York Style buildings, and pilgrims are lost in worldly inauthentic commodities, rather than sharing their Hajj experience with each other, they are discussing their Hotel experience and amenities of tour packages. I condemn that, the KSA shouldn't encourage Hajj as a part of their business strategy, and just extend the very basic facilities for pilgrims, it could have been as simple as it used to be in the '70s, when pilgrims were performing Hajj like Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did: simple, without ostentation, no discrimination between poor and rich, sacrifice of the sole, and only staunch worship. To my recent experience of Hajj, desolately this is not the case now. The rich and poor gap can be observed due to different Hajj packages, pilgrims are not concentrating on worship but they do concentrate on their SMART phone. Pilgrims do not want to tolerate any pain, and the simplicity element is totally invisible.

I: Please share your Hajj package buying experience of 2012?

R5:

> I bought it in £1700, the Hajj tour operator told us different names of the packages like, VVIP, VIP etc. My was economy it was 2 star hotel which is now no more existing near Grand Mosque premises. To be honest with these Hajj operators lied to us, what he promised to us he didn't deliver to us. When we landed there we came to know that we have no hotel there, he sold those hotel rooms which was booked for us to somebody else in a higher price and put us in a very far hotel situated in Azizya. Then when he left us in hotel he was vanished for 3 to 4 days, we talked to Saudi police but they are very rude as well, so we were in the middle of nowhere. Later Saudi police caught him and recover the money from him but it was a night mare for our Hajj group.

I: R5, you have performed Hajj in 2001 and 2015, please share your experience with us? What is the difference?

R5:

> Mecca is totally changed in fact I couldn't recognise this holy city, bit I like the accommodations there now, there are everywhere 5 stars if you have money you can stay there if not you can't even dream of it. I had a very comfortable bed there in my room, every day I was getting 2 Towels, 2 shampoos, 2 soaps and the breakfast was so lavish I can't explain you, it was huge buffet, eat cornflakes, vita-bix, you name it you will get it. The evening dinner is 2 times more lavish than breakfast more than 30 dishes, roast chick, curry, Nan bread, roasted mutton, they take extra money no doubt about it but give you as well. By comparing the Hajj of 2001 and 2015, in 2001, I can enter in Mosque Haram any time but I was sleeping on the floor in my hotel room in Mecca, food was limited. But in 2015, I need to follow the time-table to enter Mosque Haram due to massive construction going on there and also increase in pilgrim's turnover. I was sleeping in my air-conditioned hotel room with comfortable bed though sometimes unfortunately missed prayers due to nice sleep, and also enjoying eating lunch and breakfast buffet consisting of 36 dishes which includes roasted chicken, different salads, Vita-bix and other food items every day in breakfast, receiving new towels, clean bed sheets, shampoos and soaps. However, I asked a question to myself, am I here to enjoy these facilities or to perform my spiritual religious duty of Hajj.

I: Can you please compare your 2001 and 2015 spiritual experience of Hajj, what is the difference if any?

R5:

> I think 2001 Hajj was easy there was no construction going on and now too much construction and your worship came under timetable now, I have feeling everybody was running left and right but very few are concentrating towards worship. In 2001 there was no mobile phone pilgrims have time for each other now pilgrims are SMART they are busy with their phones, 2001 you can't take the picture but now every second someone is taking selfie. So there is a lot of change.

I: What was your spiritual experience, because you have also performed to Hajj?

R3:

My 2014 Hajj was a like a bumpy ride, it was a normal packages but our tour operator deceived us and didn't provide the transport to Mina that was bad experience. But I learned one thing from this experience, pilgrim is looking for comforts in Hajj now, they can't resist even a small pain. Mina is only 4km away from Mecca but we were shouting for transport, actually I was thinking at that time regarding our Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) he was not having any food or not too much food or water, no transport, no tents and look it us if any amenities are missing we start shouting, pilgrims have no patience now, which is the part of Hajj.

I: How do you take the hotel buildings sounding Grand Mosque?

R3:

I do not know what to say and how to say, due to the presence of these hotel, the pilgrims who are living bit far needs to reach at least 4 hours prior to prayers, the pilgrims living in these big hotels they come first into the grand Mosque and occupied their place, and now everybody wants live in these hotels as they are actually located inside the vicinity of the Grand Mosque, and especially for Friday prayers pilgrims who are living far they started coming to grand Mosque in night time to secure their place for the prayers which will be offered next day.

These buildings are giving wrong Messages, for instance when I went on the roof top of the hotel I felt that Allah house is under your feet, very sad very painful. When we are in our houses we always say do not face your feet towards Mosque and do not make your home higher than Mosque, but what's happening in Mecca, is out of mind. The real actual house of Allah in this condition really put negative impact on your spiritual experience.

I: So far from the discussion I have analysed that pilgrims are looking for too many facilities, then where is that Hajj gone which is based on simplicity, no ostentatious behaviour, worship with hardship, no discrimination, no poor no rich, are we looking for easy Hajj?

R1:

I will tell you, it is a good question, So far whatever participants said it, I said it in the beginning Hajj is now a business, participants whatever said it is somehow directly or in directly attached with business. Please give me some time to express myself now. Which Hajj we should perform? The which our Prophet (pbuh) has performed , we have to perform Hajj as our Prophet told us, what our religion is telling us, so we have to perform Hajj according to Islamic ideology.

Our religion said do business agreed, but one of our honourable participant said Hajj was Business in the past as well. No, that business is different from current business. In the past the pilgrims used to bring commodities with them to sell in

Mecca or during Hajj, only to cover their expenses. But current business strategy is actually taking money from pilgrims, so there is a great deal of difference between current business and the business of the past.

Our religion is saying the City of Mecca is the city of all Muslims of the world. This city doesn't belong to any particular country. Look before Mecca resident believe in this ideology that was why they consider pilgrims the guest of Allah, the pilgrims used to tie their camels and products in their houses without any fear, free of charge, the real guest of Allah and mainly the real sprit of Hajj. But now you can't find this sprit anywhere in the Hajj, because it is only now business and but business. This is the main reason that Hajj became the product now. if you go again back in the past up till late 1950's Pakistan government used to contribute in the Hajj expenses and help Saudi government as well, likewise other Muslim countries were also doing that, I want to say that Mecca should be shared with all Muslim nations, all nations like past should contribute in the expenses of Mecca. But Saudi stopped this, because they want pure business. I would say Saudi Arabia should do a Business but out of the premises of Mecca. One more thing one to say, there is a misconception among our people is that they also consider going to holy city Madinah is also part of Hajj, which is not true, Hajj is only performed in the premises of Mecca. If Saudi wants to promote tourism they should do outside Mecca premises, no problem, facilitate people there, and earn money from people, there. What's happening currently in Hajj according to me is not reasonable at all, and therefore it is not Hajj like our Prophet (PBUH) taught us.

I: Can I say that pilgrim is looking for short cuts now?

R1:

But why he is searching for this, because Saudi government has created the environment like this and put different restrictions on Hajj. Look at those big towers standing right on the Allah house, gave negative feelings or experiences. Look I still know the people who performed Hajj by foot, they had lots of facilities but they refused it because they want to do Hajj like 'Sunnah' , so I want to say what is happening in Mecca in the context of Hajj is totally wrong.

I: I want to ask you all have you ever performed Tawaf on the third floor or second floor of the grand mosque?

R3-6:

We tried it but then left it.

I: Why it is facility, so you can avoid rush?

R4-6

It is indeed, but very long circle for us got tired.

I: So can I say you people are not looking for facility but your comfort?

R4-6:

HAHAHAHAHHA Pretty true.

I: Now Saudi government extending the grand Mosque on a larger scale so more hundred thousand people can participate, more Muslims have chance to perform Hajj, which is a good facility? Your comment please?

R4:

This can be taken from 2 perspectives, as you said it is a facility more people will be accommodated, but on the other side it is a business move, more pilgrims more revenue, more visas, more hotels, more infrastructure etc.

R1:

Let me tell another thing, all the buildings surrounding the Grand Mosque belongs to the Royal family of the Saudi Arabia, if the grand Mosque extended where the business revenue will go, to Saudi royal family, directly or indirectly. Look the thing is that if the Hajj operation is getting bigger and bigger every year so more infrastructure required. So it is better to put full stop somewhere, 5 million is not small number. But no every increasing the capacity is a direct indicator that Saudi Arabia wants to earn more revenue. Actually Saudi Mixed Hajj with Tourism, but in the reality the tourism sprit is different to Hajj.

We perform Hajj as a religious duty, for the sake of tourism we can go to Turkey and enjoy bit Muslim heritage there, but Saudi government is actually putting his back for Hajj and mixing it with tourism. Mecca should be left as it is, local Mecca neighbourhood should be left as it is, the commercial activities regarding Hajj should be stop at once, draw a line, and all tourism activities should be across that line. Once somebody asked me a question regarding the medical facilities in the Hajj, I want to say when I performed my first Hajj I was not in any group as there was not concept of it, I went through sponsorship scheme, I rented my own flat in Mecca etc etc. In that journey one of my relative was a doctor and we took our medicines as well, then another Doctor joined us from my own tribe, so people like these and facilities are there, you can gather them, my point is that the premises of the Mecca should be only used as a religious vicinity, there shouldn't be any 5 star hotels there, I have both experiences current and historic, when I performed Umrah first the Kaaba premises was full of heritage and it was a small place, it was September very hot, milk shake hawkers were there not the shops, and now when I went in 2014, I also stayed in a 5star hotel there, it was not exactly a Hajj, lot of constructions going on there, the most sad thing the Saudi government gave religious ruling (Fatwa) that all hotels in the premises of the Mecca should be consider the part of the Grand the Mosque, can you believe it now Hajj is running on the Fatwas, now Hajj is not Hajj it is controlled by Saudi government, hotel people told me you can perform the prayers in this hotel as this is declared the part of the Grand Mosque.

R2:

I was listening everyone, they said food was good facilities were good, nice rooms were available, but the basic aim was to perform Hajj and do the Tawaf of Al-Haram, all prayers should be offered inside the grand Mosque, but in the end he said it was my regret that I couldn't offered my all prayers in the premises of grand Mosque and having lacking of spiritual experience. The reason he gave himself that grand Mosque is in the process of extension and due to health and safety they closed lots of entry and exit points, and if they do not do this then the accidents can take place there, the example of crane accident is in front of us and died there, but accidents do happen wherever there is a construction work going on.

I: But my aim to say this all, that if they are extending the grand Mosque and the capacity reached to 2 to 3 million isn't that good thing for the pilgrims or you people think it is a bad thing for the pilgrims?

R6:

Well this is good for Saudi government because more cash is coming in, I think they should stop putting more pilgrims inside, and I think they should increase the restriction time on pilgrim from offering Hajj which is current 5 but should be increase to 10 years. Like this I think the Hajj sprit should be restored because less commercial activities will take place.

R2:

I think this is not the Justice with me and with you people.

I: look what about poor people then from where they will bring 3 to 4 thousand pounds to perform Hajj.

R3:

Then in this case brother the Hajj is not (Farz) on you, Allah said if you can't afford it financially do not perform it. Yes on the other hand I understand we sometimes do Hajj for status which is a wrong concept.

R5:

Listen brothers, at the moment poor and rich both pilgrims are going there but they are now classified and segregated which is totally wrong, we are pilgrims should be same there shouldn't be a difference between rich and poor. Listen brother I have heard that when tourism penetrates in the roots of something that place lost its authenticity. Look now in these 5 star hotels you are enjoying Spa bath and showers, you are eating 36 dishes a day, and you are not coming out from your air condition rooms and offering prayers from there, this is the impact of Tourism on us there in Saudi Arabia, these are all tourism products. Yes if you want to accommodate 5 million pilgrims construct standardised rooms instead of 5star hotels.

R4:

> I want to add something here please, I do not want to name people of my group, they are standing in front of Kaaba, they started offering their prayers but they didn't finish it, and left prayer in the middle went back to their hotels, as they said it was very hot, so I want to say the sprit in Hajji's are decreasing due to the luxury services available in the Mecca, so there are Haji's like this now as well and it is increasing. I was surprised that a person standing in front of Allah house and having so weak sprit of Islam, my question why he went there?

I: Another thing came under observation that Hajji is now a SMART Haji, every minute someone SMART phone is ringing, and then selfie after selfie is a normal routine there, the question is, the spiritual experience of Hajj is under jeopardy due to this SMART technology or I am wrong?

R5:

> I saw almost everybody is having this phone there and almost everybody is having headphones as well and performing Tawaf.

R3:

> I am really surprised how a pilgrim can be involved in such a devil's act, we are there for the confessions of our sines but actually we are gaining sins there, when a person start performing Tawaf he is entering in a spiritual zone where he communicate with Allah, say Labik homa Labik loudly, but suddenly phone rang and they went back to the world the communication from Allah is now easily disconnected due to this Phone technology, they he pilgrim opened his camera and show to world look what I am doing and start taking selfies with different postures. Talking talking and talking on the phone is Hajj now.

I: So do you think that these luxury items which are present in the Mecca or in the Hajj, is putting negative impact on the spiritual experience of the pilgrim or I am wrong?

R3:

> 100 % it is putting negative impact on the spiritual experience of Hajj, this is now Religious Tourism brother, the pilgrims are becoming tourist now.

R2:

> Well I want to add, if the Saudi government allow this technology it is not good as well but if they not allow this they are still bad. I know now every Hajj package is having free sim card, R1 I want to stop you here, actually now we are not going for Hajj we are going for Chatting. R5: Not only selfie but now they are making movies there.

R2:

> Look I think people are lacking of education

I: Which education you are talking about here?

R2:

Religious education I am saying, and the level of the faith we couldn't achieved it either being a Muslim, these things human should know themselves what is right and wrong. OK I will not rule out that off course this also come under Business as well, but there is an element of practicality and demand inside as well. The haji's are demanding these things now from the tour operators, because the moment they landed on the soil of Saudi Arabia they need to contact their families and friends, and this is our number if you want to contact us you can do it. And people outside also send them each and every news of the external word. When I went to Hajj I bought 2 sim card one for the phone one for the speedy internet, this internet is very important in Hajj now because you can use free WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Webber etc.

R1:

that what I was saying people are not going for Hajj now like before, and you said it is lacking of education, look forget about having Oxford education, you said people are lacking of religious education, no I am not agreed, people who are having religious education they perform Hajj because they know it is the 5th pillar of Islam and it is mandatory, and also the conditions of it. But due to weak faith we are enjoying their cyber Hajj not the actual Hajj, if he is religious he will only do worship there but if he is obsessed with worldly items then he is performing in your language a touristic Hajj. Look before people when come for Hajj, they told their families it might be my last meeting with you, God knows I will come alive or not, I am going to make my Allah happy and ask for forgiveness from him.

R2:

Look being a tour operator, this is the demand of pilgrims to have these luxuries, and I am the witness for this, the pilgrim when approach us to buy Hajj package they ask first for luxuries, comforts, the Hajj question will come in the end. Look we are not pushing any pilgrim to buy this sim or that luxury rooms and other luxury amenities, it is they who demand. So therefore accusing tour operators for all of this mess is not correct. We told them morally do not make selfie but this is an individual act.

R5:

Look pilgrims are asking these things because it is available if it is not nobody will ask for this, so please do not deny that this is not business. Hajj is now converted in to an industry of hospitality, tourism and telecom sector. If they do not introduce these things there will be no demand, they actually try to derail pilgrims from the religious path.

R3:

Well I am agreed but remember if there is no demand no supply.

I: Can I say that pilgrims are getting materialistic now?

R5:

> Off course we are all agreed on this and due to this the spiritual experience is going down and down every day. Our spiritual experience is converting into touristic experience, we go to perform Hajj but are we performing it according to Sunnah, no we are doing this for the world.

R3:

> Pilgrims including me when I bought the tour package I told agent take the money but the facilities should be number one.

I: Can I say Hajj is a product of Islam and who ever want to buy it in different forms can buy it?

R1:

> Absolutely no doubt it, this is the case now, it is a religious duty but now highly commercialised or in your language commodified.

I: Who are involved to commodify it or commercialise it?

R4:

> Both parties, pilgrims and Saudi government but more Saudi government, they never thought 30 years to shape Mecca like this, but now they realised this is an industry therefore take advantage of it. Secondly, oil industry is getting weakening, patrol rates came down from $57 barrel to $29 barrel that is why they are concentrating on Hajj, because this is readymade religious market, which will never ever go into loss. They switched their trade strategies into this. Now people are saying Hajj packages actually are contributing in Saudi economy, and also people said now Hajj is the most expensive tour of tourism in the world. Therefore Hajj is a product, can be bought from anywhere in the word.

I: If you take Hindu religious tourism for instance Kumb Mela which is attracting 6 to 7 million pilgrims, bigger than Hajj, Indian government can take advantage of it and commodify it but so far they didn't, there is no hotels there no shops there etc. They can provide train services sim cards etc. Israel is the so called honour of Mosque Aqsa, even they didn't build any 5 star hotels there though they can, it is rich country, they didn't touch that religious area and kept the heritage there, In Spain Santiago is one of the biggest pilgrimage area, people are going there by foot still, my question is Why the follower of Islam thought to commodify Hajj or Mecca?

R2:

> Look brother the Mosque next to us, look its capacity it is like 500 people and for every Muslim prayer is mandatory, now if there is no toilet for them and at the time of prayer somebody has to go to toilet and there is no toilet, and then you say there no facility due to commercialisation, doesn't make sense.

R4:

Brother Toilet is a wrong example, toilet is not a commodity it is a necessity. Making toilets for pilgrims in Mecca is good thing this is called facility, but building 5 star hotel is luxury, we can do Hajj without that, we can perform Hajj without phone, we can perform Hajj without having a choice of 36 dishes etc. Saudi should build facilities not luxuries.

I: Can I say Hajj is like religious holidays?

R1:

I said this before all Muslim countries should contribute in Hajj facilities not into the luxuries like Saudi is currently doing, these luxuries are the root cause of discrimination between rich and poor, expensiveness of Hajj, making of cyber Hajj, Luxury hospitality, luxury transports etc. these are not facilities these are accessories, and due to this concept Hajj is converting in to religious holidays.

I: Grand Mosque is expanding I have no reservation on it, it should be expanded as you said more people can join, my question is this expansion is going on the cost of heritage of Mecca, I am the witness when I did my first Hajj in 2005 I saw for instance Umh Hani house pillars and Ottoman empire pillars inside the grand Mosque and now they are not there, this is a small example, Mecca lost almost of its heritage in that expansion project, my question is what you will show to your future generation, what message you were giving to your future generations?

R3:

Jabal al Rahmah is like a park now, with camel riding, swings for kids, and no . . . authenticity due to modernism. When our kids read in books the significance of Jabal al Rahmah, and literally then visit that place, it is no less than a picnic spot; therefore the loss of heritage is taking away Islam from the hearts of pilgrims and future generations.

R6:

This thing is taking Islam far away from our future generations, it should be stopped. This is history the nations who lost their histories they future is in jeopardy.

R3:

Even the Kaaba when it was build it was in oval shape not in square shape but due to wear and tear of seasons and extensions from different ruling parties of Mecca, the shape has changed.

R5:

When I went in 1989 for Hajj, there was no building at all there and lot of heritage was there, even the well of ZAM ZAM, Ottoman empire didn't damage that much as Saudi did it, because of extension and their religious sect's ideology of Wahhabism.

It was an open field and the fortress of Ottoman Empire was on the hill which was visible from Grand Mosque, let me give you an information that Ottoman Empire fortress was knocked down in 2008 maybe and they build Mecca clock tower hotel on it, which is a shame. Because this is now business so anything can be knockdown for builds anything which is commercial.

I: As you people said Kaaba has changed a lot and even Mecca is totally changed, my question is then what is the authenticity of Mecca?

R4:

I think it is still authentic as our Prophet (PBUH) is authentic, our Quran is authentic, Hajj never stopped even there are flaws in our faiths, even due to commodification, and whole year's Umrah is taking place, from ancient times to current people are circumambulation this Kaaba. Even this house of ALLAH is damaged due to several reasons and then rebuild again but still its authenticity is still there in our hearts. The place or location is authentic, Allah himself has taken the responsibility of this house and it is written in Quran, it will exist till the angels day, it will be lifted up in the sky when Allah want it.

Its tangibility authenticity is there as well, the Maqam Ibrahim is there, never changed, the Black stone is there never changed. Its intangibility is authentic as well because Hajj never stopped, in any condition up till now.

R1:

But on the other hand, Look at the place where we perform Saee the two hills of Safa & Marwa both are demolished actually, I saw them in 1989. What authenticity we are talking about, there is no authenticity. Saying the place is same but the object is not, then authenticity is under question.

Look let me put like this, Islam is living in the people's heart, people are still offering Hajj, but what expectations they brought with them was not fulfilled due to commodification, this is my opinion. Look Kaaba ancient pictures are like idols now people start hanging these pictures in their houses to keep the history alive, and they respect it a lot, it is symbolic now. A grand Mosque premise is changed on transformational level, concepts are changing, and this is against Islam. Look even in this room we are hanging the ancient Kaaba picture; it is like idol, even in my own house I have old pictures hanging. One of my relative gave me the replica of ancient Kaaba door which I hanged on the wall but due to some reasons it was damaged and my relatives who presented me this gift felt very bad and angry on me, actually we brought Kaaba in our houses now, this is wrong actually.

R5:

Actually authenticity is also challenged with comfort, look at the place of Saee, fully air-condition marble place, the real surface is vanished. So authenticity is under question, even a place.

I: Is Saudi's are only looking for branded Haji market?

R1-R3-R4-R5-R6:

All are unanimously agreed, But R2 is not.

I: Can I say due to this commodification process the spiritual experience of pilgrims is converting in to touristic experience.

R1-R3-R4-R5-R6:

all are unanimously agreed but R2 added that we pilgrims no doubt we are addicted for comforts, and we became very competitive and status conscious people in the context of Hajj, for instance one person did 5 star Hajj so I have to do in a same way, money is not the problem, I want comfort. One day will come that pilgrim sit in the train or standing on the conveyor belt to perform Tawaf, people are also looking for that time as well.

Look we are going there for Hajj so we should do Hajj not a business class Hajj, try to be as simple as you can, this is in your hand.

Actually people forget everything very quickly, they do not care what is heritage, authenticity, they only thought we are performing Hajj, no matter it is fulfilling the Islamic demands or not. It is commercialised or not but we are performing Hajj, and now the disposable income is high so everybody is looking for comforts, not how they are performing Hajj.

Actually Hajj has been commodified since the time of Prophet Mohammad and Abu JAHAL, when Muslim took over Kaaba, Abu Jahal said now they have power and we have nothing, power means: tribal and economical.

I: Thank you very much everyone for your participation.

Appendix 2. Stage Two documents

Participant Information Sheet for Semi-Structure interviews conducted in Saudi Arabia

Example of one Semi-Structured interview Transcript

Stage (TWO)

Participant Information Sheet for Semi-Structure interviews conducted in Saudi Arabia

The commodification of Islamic religious tourism from a spiritual to a touristic experience. The case of Mecca and the Hajj.

Researcher contact information:
Jahanzeeb Qurashi
Candidate of PhD, the School of Management
University of Central Lancashire
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Tel: 07459181571

What is the study about?
I am investigating the impact of commodification on Mecca and Hajj (Saudi Arabia), also how it transforms spiritual experience of pilgrim in to more touristic experience.

What will you need to do?
I am asking you to take part in the Semi-Structure interviews to discuss topics regarding commodification of destination, ritual, authenticity of religious journey and spiritual & touristic experiences of the journey.

How will the information be used?
The recording will be transcribed (written down) by the researcher and will not be played to anyone else and remain confidential. Your identity will be kept anonymous throughout focus group interview until or unless you give permission to disclose it.

Any information collected during the focus groups will only be used for research, including research articles and conference presentations but your name will not be used and no one will be able to identify you from the information.

What if you agree to the research but then change your mind?

You are allowed to do so, you can change your mind at any point, before, during or after, and the material will be deleted or destroyed.

What will you get from this?

This is an opportunity for you to be involved in a piece of research and you may find the process itself very interesting. The interviews will give you a chance to think about the way you interpret, present contemporary development in Mecca and its impact on the Hajj and pilgrim's spiritual experience. I will also be happy to pass on the completed research article and a copy of the completed PHD research, if requested, once it has been produced.

You will need to be aged over 18 and sign the consent form in order to be able to take part in the study.

Example of only *one* Semi-Structure interview Transcript

R1) 0020 Interview, British Pilgrim

Question) what is the importance of Hajj in your life?

R1:

> Obviously the Hajj is the mandatory pillar of Islam, especially for those who can financially and physically capable, and after Zakat and Ramadan this pillar is one of the most important pillars of Islam.

Q) What is the essence of Hajj, on which principles Hajj is standing actually?

R1:

> Prophet (pbuh) did one Hajj in his life only but he performed several umrahs, we took the impression that one should do Hajj once only and it should be Hajj Mubrore, Allaha said once you performed Hajj I will forgive your all sins and pilgrim become same like newly born baby which has no account of sins, also there are some hadith of Prophet (PBUH) that once you done Hajj Mubrore you will go straight to Heaven.

Q) Is that your first Hajj?

R1:

> No, I did my first Hajj in 1984 with my father as it was his wish and at that time I really didn't know exactly the essence of Hajj, and then I performed my second Hajj in 1989 with my friends and it was by road all the way from UK to Mecca but that was for educational purposes, it was not only Hajj but it was the discovery of journey of Quran as well. I did some research before we left UK but when we started journey towards Mecca we discover lots of new spiritual places.

Q) What is the difference between the Hajj and the city of Mecca in 1984, 1989 and 2016, what changes you have observed so far?

R1:

> Hajj is performed in the fields of Muzdalifah, Arafat and in Mina obviously Kaaba as well, the changes I have observed is that in 1984 there were very common buildings, no skyscrapers. I want share one experience here when I came for Hajj in 1984 and went to mount Noor and Cave Hira I can see from there Kaaba with naked eye and performed my nafl their towards facing Kaaba and from cave I can see Kaaba clearly but now in 2016, I can't see the Kaaba because Skyscrapers have blocked the view of Kaaba, not only this you can't even see the Mosque in Mecca.

Q) You came several times to Mecca as a pilgrim, in which journey you felt the strongest spiritual experience.

R1:

> I think if I look at the past, 1984 Hajj was more authentic in the sense of Heritage, plenty to explore regarding our Islamic history but as I said I was not spiritually aware at that time probably I was very young, in 1989 spiritually I was strong and having strong educational back ground, I learned a lot in that Hajj, also at that time you have to struggle in Hajj, whereas now in 2016 I think it is more or less like religious holidays full facilities and luxuries.

Q) Currently what type of Hajj package you are holding?

R1:

> Now you can't perform Hajj alone like in the past, Saudi government made it mandatory that one should travel in groups. My package is called 5 Star Hajj package, Hajj rites stayed the same but my accommodation, food and beverages, transports and other amenities will be very much contemporary and different with other ordinary pilgrims, the comfort level in my package is certainly higher than others.

Q) Do you believe the lesson or the essence of Hajj is based on simplicity, equality, no ostentatious behaviour and worship with hardship?

R1:

> Absolutely I believed on this, simplicity is very important, but that doesn't mean the comfort I am having in my hotel is jeopardising simplicity or other elements, because the worship I am going to do here requires comfort as well, if I am not fresh I am not able to perform them in a good manner.

Q) Did Prophet Muhammad (PBHU) also do Hajj in comfort?

R1:

> Look the time has changed now, you question me before what is the difference between the Hajj of 1984, 1989 and 2016, the difference is that man has changed his/her behaviour , facilities and comfort levels has changed, at that time ZAM ZAM water was not available outside Mecca but now it available in Madinah as well.

> Obviously the Hajj Prophet Muhammad did was full of hardships, struggle and when he migrated from Madinah to Mecca he took 70 camels with him, so we can't do that now, if we do it will be a chaos here, no doubt Prophet struggled a lot at that time but even currently we are also struggling according to our strength. But I want to say that as well we now as pilgrims are very soft and having less faith in Allah and spiritually weak, Prophet Faith on Allah was enormous, spiritually strong like anything but we are not like him now.

Q) If I will take all the 5 or 4 star privileges from you, would you still do Hajj?

R1:

It will be very difficult but I will do it, I think that will be a better hajj than this which can be felt more spiritually. Pilgrim is now only looking for facilities and luxuries it is natural phenomena, human is like this.

Q) Can I say that Haji is looking for comfort and luxuries?

R1:

Of course, there are no limits of wishes and demands and pilgrims are looking for this, I also knew those people who do not like these comforts and luxuries but if you offer them they will not refuse it.

Q) Do you feel proud you are doing 5 stars Hajj?

R1:

No I am not, even I am in ordinary Hajj package I am happy.

Q) How do justify the element of equality in Hajj, you are doing Hajj in luxury and one pilgrim is doing Hajj on road, don't you think it is jeopardising element of equality of Hajj?

R1:

Look when I performed my first Hajj in 1984 there were less people on Hajj but now the disposable income has increased and pilgrims are coming here in millions and there needs and requirements have changed as well and they are looking for more comfortable Hajj. The people who are doing Hajj on roads possible they do not have enough money to afford so from Islamic perspective Hajj is not mandatory for them, they shouldn't come. Well to certain extent you are right the way Hajj is getting expensive due presence of luxury market the gap between rich and poor is increasing, you can also say the pilgrims on the road may experiencing more hardships deliberately because they want to be felt like prophet Muhammad did, less food, less money, and probably no shelter, but only Allah knows whose Hajj is being accepted.

Q) The Saudi government keep making 5 star hotels do you think it is good idea or you have any alternate plan for that?

R1:

Location of Azizyah is 3 to 4 miles away from Mecca, just imagine you are walking there in the scorching heat of 47c to perform you prayer and then come back, so Saudi government categorised locations the more you are near to Mosque Haraaam you have to stay in 5 to 4 star hotel and if not near then Azizyah, meaning only a rich man who has financial resources only they can privilege to stay next to mosque and pilgrim with less money have to suffer, so this is the race of money, especially it has been observed people from developed world stay next to mosque and majority people who came from

African countries they live 4 miles away as they do not have enough financial resources.

Q) Do you think Hajj is now commodified/ business? If yes how?

R1:

Off course it is a business not from now since ages, even before Islam it was a business it was like a religious fun fair and everybody was doing a business, Arabs travel from far away to do business. I want to stop you here; I am not asking the businesses within Hajj, I am asking is it Hajj is like a product of Islam, just pay and buy it anytime?

I understood, yes 100% it is a business and product, it is available in the shops of travel agents, when I performed my first Hajj anybody can perform anytime no involvement of any agent no groups no need for booking a hotel. But you see Agents are also doing hard work they need to run their households as well so they have to make profit out of it but they are cheaters as well sometimes they do not full fill their promises and they left pilgrims in the middle of nowhere which is un-Islamic.

Q) So can I say that Hajj became "pay to pray concept"?

R1:

Mmmhhhh… look as I said if you do not have financial resources Allah said Hajj is not mandatory for you, yes as I said it is a business so if you have money you can pray if not then even Islam is saying do not come, well I like the term you have used heheheh….hehehe.. The concept of the business is that there is one product and you have to sell it and enjoy profits.

Q) In your experience do you think few Hajis are only here to show off and just want to earn the degree of Haji?

R1:

Yes, it happens if Allah gave financial strength to someone and he is staying in gold package or platinum packages and came several times he might telling people as well, but again it depends on his (Niyat) which Allah knows very well. So if he is doing this deliberately then there is no reward for him from Allah. There is another side of the coin as well; Hajj invitation is only from Allah so might be Allah like that rich man and calling him every year. I think it is difficult to decide.

Q) I was just talking about comfort and luxuries, I want to draw your attention towards a hotel called Abraj-al-Khudi the world biggest 5 star hotel in the world, having 10000 rooms 19 shopping malls, six helipads and so on…. Now the Haji's will come on Helicopters to Mecca, do you think we need that kind of luxuries in the Hajj? Is it a concept of Hajj or Holidays?

R1:

Hehehmmm…..last Ramadan I met one friend in Mecca he told me he and his family never go to any other destination for holidays but Mecca and may be these helicopters are for the safety of VIPS pilgrims or may be in future pilgrims do (Tawaf) on helicopters, you never know the world is changing rapidly.

Q) Then where is simplicity gone of Hajj?

R1:

You are correct I mean the pilgrim is asking for more and more and more there is no limit they became materialistic, and then one stage came where you are only for the world and you intentions towards religious spirituality is vanished.

Q) Can I say without hesitation that Haji became materialistic?

R1:

Not all but yes the trend took place; actually I would say the rich class is more materialistic than poor class.

Q) Do you think the gap between rich and poor hajis are giving to two market segment, branded haji and non-branded haji?

R1:

I am not agreed with you from theological perspective because all are here for Hajj, yes from market commercialisation segmentation perspective you are correct the gap is increasing between rich and poor Hajis.

Q) I have observed the pilgrims who are staying in the 5 star hotels offering their prayers inside their hotel prayers rooms or rooms instead of going to mosque; don't you think the luxury is putting negative impact on the spiritual experience of Haji? It is better if they stay in their homes and hang the picture of Kaaba and offer prayer in front of it?

R1:

Yes, these hotels are in the premises of Al-Haram and the Fatwa has been giving by Saudi religious scholars that all Mecca hotels are the part of Al-Haram Mosque, so anybody can pray anywhere, but to me this is not correct then what is the purpose of coming to Mecca if you want to pray from your room of hotel, no this is not fair and against the Islamic values, very sad to say this happening now, I have stayed in Fairmount hotel and believe me the prayers you are offering in hotels are not having strong spiritual background, the house of Allah is in front of you and you are offering prayers from hotel, it is a shame, you are here to increase the spiritual experience not to decrease it. But you said

those hotels are the part of Al-Haram, yes I said Allah will accept your prayers from hotel as well but you are unfortunate that you are doing this deliberately just for the sake of comfort, we are there in search of spiritual tranquillity not for worldly spirituality. Allah will never give you equal reward for the prayer you offered in hotel than a prayer which was offered in Mosque Al-Haram.

Q) How these Skyscrapers buildings which are currently surrounding Mecca putting impact on the authenticity and spirituality of the city of Mecca? For instance these buildings and extension of the mosque were built on the cost of religious cultural heritage genocide? Lots of prophets houses were demolished houses of (Sahba) are not here now etc. etc. I have observed during circumambulation instead of concentrating on their worship people are looking at high rise buildings and praising them.

R1:

Look this is the modern era and as I said before pilgrims are looking for comfort, so I would say this is the progress.

Q) Progress towards what?

Progress towards modern Islamic society, a modern Mecca, because this is contemporary era, the buildings surrounding Kaaba mesmerised pilgrims. I am sad to tell you when I came first and second time here in 1984 and 86 I can see the minarets of holy Mosque from miles away which really increased my spiritual powers but now I can't see them anymore from far away but now I can see Fairmount hotel tower from miles which now symbolises the Holy Mosque, which is a shame. Then what about you spiritual experience now. Well I missed my previous Hajj spiritual experience, now everything is history but that was a great time, and what you see now is a modern Mecca. Do you miss historical Mecca or you are adopting Modern Mecca? for me I missed the Mecca I have seen before full of heritage and authentic places, that Mecca was full of simplicity, love, equality and traditional hospitality and now you can't dream of these things, I am sorry for future generations they missed all of it.

Q) Why these extensions are necessary, is it because more Muslims wants to perform Hajj or Saudi government is looking for more capacity to bring more business, as you said before it a business?

R1:

Yes to both extend you are correct, increasing capacity brought business to Saudi government and also increasing disposable income in Muslim nations are increasing the demand of Hajj. Obviously, what modernisation is taking place in Mecca is due to income of Hajj.

Q) What is the role of SMART phone in pilgrim's spiritual life?

R1:

HHHHMMM SMART phone, look there was a time when pilgrim just called once to his/her family on landline and said I have reached safe and sound to Mecca, now every member of the family has SMART phone, if you have family of 6

means at least you have 4 SMART phone in your house, so this is another progress towards modernisation. Now SMART is the most favourite way to communicate with friends and families, before you travel you talk to people face to face and you improve your verbal communication but now SMART phone is like a family member everybody is talking to it he is surrounded by couple of people on social media and enjoying his life. Is it impacting spirituality, for instance people during Tawaf is busy with talking people, busy in taking selfies, using Facebook , showing external world what I am doing currently? Are you in Allah's house or in a playground?

It has negative impact and positive as well but unfortunately pilgrims are leaning towards more negative side. If you are taking selfie it is not against Islam, even you can take it during (Tawaf), no problem. Look be in limits that would be ok but video and audio chatting is not a good idea during (Tawaf) obviously it is against the Islamic values. But Prophet said when you come for Hajj cut yourself from worldly commodities? As this is the place of confession and ask for forgiveness? Do you think due to this phone we can do that? Look this is the journey for Allah the moment we left home we are cut off from the world, yes do not use these gadgets when you are in process of prayers and rites.

Q) So far what we discussed I found that pilgrim is looking for comfort luxury, technology, shortcuts etc. actually tourist is looking for these types of things and pilgrim consider being more religiously poised and ignoring these touristic items. Do you think pilgrims became tourist now or half half?

R1:

If the pilgrim is using technology in a negative way he is wrong and if he is only looking for luxury hospitality and having his intentions more towards worldly items, so yes he is a tourist, to be honest with you Hajj is religious tourism.

Q) Then what about spiritual experience of pilgrim where it is heading?

R1:

Well it depends from individual to individual but generally these worldly commodities including technologies are definitely decreasing spiritual experience of pilgrim, this is also because of lacking of religious education in the pilgrims.

Appendix 3: Western focused literature

Religious Tourism Economic/Business Issues			
Authors/Date	**Topic**	**Article/Books Focus**	**Publications**
Rinschede , G/1992	*Forms of religious tourism*	The article differentiates between short and long term religious tourism and their economics	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism Research
Michael and Lew/2009	*Understanding and managing tourism Impacts*	The book explores various impacts of religious tourism including economics	Routledge, Taylor and Francis group
Shoval/2000	*Commodification and theming of the sacred: changing patterns of tourist consumption in the 'Holy Land'*	The book focuses on religious tourist consumption	Peer Reviewed, Routledge
Thomas/2013	*Small firms in tourism*	The book explores the SME role in tourism	Peer Reviewed, Routledge
Tribe/2002	*Tourism: A critical business*	The book provides a voice for the less powerful developed countries of the west	Peer Reviewed, SAGE, Journal of Travel Research
Sinclair/2007	*Tourism and economic development: A survey*	The article surveys the literature on tourism and economic development, identifying the contribution that religious tourism can make to development, including foreign currency, income and employment	Peer Reviewed, The journal of development studies
Bryan Wilson/1976	*Contemporary Transformations of Religion*	The book explores the Modern Western Religions economic values	Oxford University Press
Vukonić, B/1992	*Medjugorje's religion and tourism connection*	This article explores the economic development needs attention in terms of both tourism in general and religious tourism in particular, the fame of Medjugorje has spread well beyond	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism Research

		the borders of Yugoslavia	
Vukonić, B/1996	*Tourism and Religion*	The book explores the relationship of Christianity and tourism from economic and social perspective	Emerald Group Publishing Limited
Vukonić, B/1998	*Religious tourism: economic values or an empty box*	This article emphasis on the Economics of religious tourism: A western perspective	Peer Reviewed, Zagreb International review of Economics and Business
Vukonić, B/2002	*Religion tourism and economics: a convenient symbiosis, tourism reaction research*	This article identify the Western religious tourism response	Peer Reviewed, Tourism Recreation Research
Einstein/2008	*Brands for faith*	The book focuses on how a religion can become a brand and a commodity	Peer Reviewed, Routledge
Shepherd/2002	*Commodification, culture and tourism*	This article revisits the question of tourism's role in the commodification of Culture, religion in the context of Marx's labour theory	Peer Reviewed, SAGE
Ward/2003	*The commodification of religion or the consumption of capitalism*	The article focuses on the term commodification in the context of religion	Peer Reviewed, SAGE
York/2001	*New Age Commodification and Appropriation of Spirituality*	The article explores both the New Age rationale for spiritual commercialization and some of the clashes this engenders with the traditions from which it appropriates	Peer Reviewed, Journal of Contemporary Religion
Zaidman/2003	*Commercialisation of religious objects: A comparison of traditional and new age religion*	The article focuses on the differences between modern and traditional religions regarding trade of religious goods	Peer Reviewed, SAGE
Timothy, Swanson/2012	*Souvenirs: Icons of meaning, commercialization and commoditization*	The article considers the commodification process of native arts and crafts into consumable tourism	Peer Reviewed, Journal of Tourism Management

		products and suggests future directions for additional works in this understudied area of tourism research.	
Dumlupinar/2010	*Market Commoditization of Products and Services*	The article look at the different strategies of commoditisation in the context of religious goods	Review of Social, Economic & Business Studies
Sizer/1999	*The ethical challenges of managing pilgrimages to the Holy Land*	The article focuses on the commodification of Israeli religious tourism, including Occupied Territories	Peer Reviewed, Emerald
Kale/2004	*Spirituality, Religion, and Globalization*	This article explores the interplay between spirituality and religion, and the forces of economics, technology, and globalization	Peer Reviewed, Journal of Micromarketing
Iannaccone/1992	*Religious markets and the economics of religion*	The article focuses on the religious consumerism of Churches	Peer Reviewed, SAGE
Wrenn/2010	*Religious Marketing is Different*	This article attempts to find common ground between the two camps by identifying the marketable components of church missions, and describing a way of marketing them that preserves the spiritual identity of the institution.	Peer Reviewed, Routledge
Conway/2006	*The commodification of religion and the challenges for theology*	The article explores how element of commodification in religion penetrates in Irish and European religions	Peer Reviewed, SAGE
Stander/2009	*The commodity*	The book chapter explores the commodification of religion in the context of MARX theory	Peer Reviewed, Emerald

Spirituality in Religious Tourism			
Author/Date	**Topic**	**Article/Books Focus**	**Publications**
Slavin, S/2003	*Walking as spiritual practice: the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compo*	This article examines the experiences of pilgrims walking to the shrine of St James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.	Peer Reviewed, Sage Journals
Durkheim, E/1912	*the Elementary Forms of Religious Life*	The book explores Churches encouraging Roman Catholics to participate in the holy sacraments	Dover Publications, INC
Sharpley, R/2009	*Tourism, Religion and Spirituality*	The book chapter identified lacking of research between the relationship of Religion and tourism	The SAGE Handbook of Tourism Studies
Turner, V and Turner, E/1978	*Image and pilgrimage in Christian culture*	The book explores the Western Christian Philosophies and manuscripts of spirituality as an evidence of tourism	Columbia University press
Smith, V. L/1992	*The quest in guest*	The article explores the Dialectical roles of pilgrims	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism Research
Knox, D. Hannam, K. Margry, J, P. Olsen, D. and Salazar, B.N/2014	*Is Tourist a Secular Pilgrim or a Hedonist in Search of Pleasure*	The article explores the change in religious spiritual behaviour in Western society	Peer Reviewed, Tourism Recreation Research
Luckmaan, T/1963	*The Invisible Religion: The Problems of Religion in Modern Society*	The book identified the Declining of spirituality in western society	Macmillan (1967)
Berger, P. L/1967	*The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*	Book identifies the reasons of Increase in Western Secularisation and decrease in spirituality	Peer Reviewed, Sociological Analysis, JSTOR
Lambert, Y/2004	*A Turning Point in Religious Evolution in Europe*	The article explores Churches spiritual attendance is on decline in Western society	Peer Reviewed, Journal of Contemporary Religion
Houtman, D and Aupers, S/2011	*Beyond the Spiritual Supermarket: The*	The book identified New Western spiritual	Book Series: International

	Social and Public Significance of New Age Spirituality	perspective for religion	Studies in Religion and Society, by Brill
Roberts, K and Yamane, D/2011	*Religion in Sociological Perspective*	The book explores the Western conservative spiritual view replaced with scientific knowledge	Peer Reviewed, SAGE Publishing
Szerszynski, B/2005	*Nature, Technology and the Sacred*	The book explores the Modern religious spiritual Christian World	The book series by Wiley
Schmidt, C. and Little, D/2005	*Qualitative Insights into Leisure as a Spiritual Experience*	The article argues the Mislaying of religious Christian organisations and leadership	Peer Reviewed, Journal of Leisure Research
Danesh, H. B/1997	*The Psychology of Spirituality: From Divided Self to Integrated Self*	The book presents the religious irrational to rational Western post-modern spiritual perspective	Landegg Academy Press, USA
Experiences of Religious Tourism			
Author/Date	**Topic**	**Article/Book Focus**	**Publication**
Harvey, D/2003	*Cell Church: It's Situation in British Evangelical Culture*	The article explores the Deinstitutionalised Experiences of Churches in Western world	Peer Reviewed, Journal of contemporary religion
Zinnbauer, B., Pargament, K. Cole, B., Rye, M. Butler, E., Belavich, T. Hipp, K., Scott, A. and Kadar, J./1997	*Religion and Spirituality: Un-fuzzing the Fuzzy*	The article argues about the Experiences of Religious liberty in Western Society	Peer Reviewed, JSTOR
Zinnbauer, B. J., Pargament, K. I. and Scott, A. B/1999	*The Emerging Meanings of Religiousness and Spirituality: Problems and Prospects*	This article examines traditional and modern psychological Experiences and characterizations of religiousness and spirituality in Western society	Peer Reviewed, Wiley
Wuthnow, R/1998	*After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950's*	The book explores about the different American religious Experiences	University of California Press
Wright, K./2008	*The Christian Travel Planner*	The book explores the different Christian Pilgrimage and	The book series, Thomas Nelson

		pilgrim Experiences	
Timothy, J, D. and Olsen, H, D/2006	*Tourism, Religion & Spiritual Journeys*	The book identifies different religious pilgrimage journeys and their Experiences	Routledge, Taylor & Francis group
Tilson, D/2001	*Religious tourism, Public relations and Church-state Partnership*	The article explores the Relationship of church and the state	Peer reviewed, Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Marketing
Stark, D. J/2009	*Religious Tourism in Roman Greece*	The thesis argues the Respect and Experiences of Religion	Thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University
Shokeid, M/1987	*Contemporary Jewish Pilgrimage*	The article argues regarding the authenticity and Experiences of religion	Encyclopaedia of Religion
Sherratt, B, W and Hawkins, D, J/1972	*Gods and Men*	The book identify the role of Leadership of churches and religious Experiences	Bookbarn International
Ratzinger, J.C/1995	*Catechism of the Catholic Church*	The book identifies the Experiences and principles of Christian religion in the form of religious instruction.	Vatican Press,Vatican
Nolan, M. L., and S. Nolan/1989	*Christian Pilgrimage in Modern Western Europe*	The article argues the contemporary pilgrimage Experience in Western Society	Journal History: Reviews of new books.
Marler, P. and Hadaway, C. K/2002	*Being Religious" or "Being Spiritual" in America*	The article identifies the difference between religion and spirituality a Western perspective	Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, JSTOR
Jackson, R. H. Rinschede, G & J. Knapp/1990	*Pilgrimage in the Mormon Church*	The article argues the different Western Sects religious perspective	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism Research
Houtman, D. and Aupers, S/2007	*the Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000*	The article explores the Historical religious and Spiritual Experiences of 14 Western nations	Journal for the scientific study of religion
Griffiths, M/2006	*The Visitor Experience at Catholic Cathedrals in Australia*	The book chapter identified the Religious and spiritual experience of Catholic Cathedrals	University of Lincoln

Eade, J/1992	*Pilgrimage and Tourism at Lourdes, France*	The article explores different Experiences of Western pilgrimage journeys	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism Research
Carrette, J and King, R/2005	*Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*	The book explores different ways of selling spirituality	Routledge
Bouma, G/2006	*Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-first Century*	The book looks the Christianity in the Twenty-first Century	Cambridge press
Jackowski, A. and Smith, V.L/1992	*Polish pilgrim-tourists*	The article explores the Polish Christianity Experiences from political, social, and economic angels	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism Research
Sharpley and Jepson/2011	*Rural tourism: A spiritual experience*	This article focuses on the spiritual aspect of rural tourism	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism Research
Meaning of Authenticity in Religious Tourism			
Author/Date	**Topic**	**Article/Book Focus**	**Publication**
Olsen/2002	*Authenticity as a concept in tourism research*	This article discusses the uses of the concept of authenticity in tourism studies	Peer Reviewed, SAGE
Cohen/2015	*Authenticity in Tourism Studies: Apres la Lutte1*	The article critically look at the Dean MacCannell concept of authenticity in tourism	Routledge
Roederer/2012	*Does authenticity really affect behavior? The case of the Strasbourg Christmas Market*	The article assess the financial value of authenticity from western Christmas markets	Peer Reviewed, Tourism Management
Kelner/2001	*Narrative construction of authenticity in pilgrimage touring*	This article analyses the shift from constructivist to existentialist conceptions of Authenticity in religious tourism.	Peer Reviewed, Routledge
Fesenmaier/1996	*Deconstructing destination image construction*	This article explores significance of tourism promotion on tourist culture as it	Peer Reviewed, Emerald

		Packages touristic representations.	
Wang/1999	*Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience*	This article aims at a conceptual clarification of the meanings of authenticity in tourist experiences.	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism
Goulding/2000	*The commodification of the past, postmodern pastiche, and the search for authenticity experiences at contemporary heritage attractions*	The article explores the nature of authenticity in religious tourism of Greece	Peer Reviewed, Emerald
Stewart/2008	*The search for authenticity in the pilgrim experience*	The present study enriches the theoretical debate on the concept of authenticity by examining its relevance to the experiences of pilgrims.	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism research
Fabio/2016	*New Trends of Pilgrimage: Religion and Tourism, Authenticity and Innovation, Development and Intercultural Dialogue: Notes from the Diary of a Pilgrim of Santiago*	The article explores the new dimensions of new pilgrim	Peer Reviewed, Emerald
Engler/2003	*Authenticity vs Staged experiences*	The article define criteria of authenticity to award tourism businesses with ... an 'apparently inauthentic staging for the tourist	Peer Reviewed, Emerald
Weidenfeldb/2015	*Authenticity and place attachment of major visitor attractions*	This paper aims to explore the relationships between place attachment and perceived authenticity of major visitor western attractions	Peer Reviewed, Journal of Tourism Management
Stewart/2008	*The search for authenticity in the pilgrim experience*	The article illustrated through examples derived from recent fieldwork on fundamentalist Christian	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism

		pilgrimage to ... the framework of theoplacity demonstrates that authenticity is shaped by religious belief	
Getz/1998	*24 Event tourism and the authenticity dilemma*	The book focuses on the Festivals with higher levels of authenticity, including the religious	Peer Reviewed, Routledge
Shackley/2006	*7 Empty bottles at sacred sites*	The book chapter focuses on the Knock which is one of the many Christian pilgrimage sites in Europe, produce devotional items and other various articles that could be considered kitsch, taking away a degree of authenticity from the souvenir or religious item	Peer Reviewed, Routledge
Salamone/1997	*Authenticity in tourism: the San Angel inns*	The article examines the revisionist literature on the culture concept in light of an examination of the two San Angel Inns, the original in Mexico City and its "daughter" inn at Disney World, Florida	Peer Reviewed, Annals of Tourism
Holderness/2009	*Rome: multi versal city: The material and the immaterial in religious tourism*	The article focuses on the authenticity of experience from Christian perspectives	Peer Reviewed, Wiley
Waitt/2001	*Authenticity in tourism and native title: Place, time and spatial politics in the East Kimberley*	The article focuses on the constructivist approach to sought the identify understandings of authenticity that are both produced and con- sumed within the religious tourism industry	Peer Reviewed, Taylor & Francis

Appendix 4: Non-Western focused literature

Religious Tourism Economic/Business Issues			
Author/Date	**Topic**	**Article/Books Focus**	**Publications**
Ahmed (1992)	*Islamic Pilgrimage Hajj to Kaaba in Mecca Saudi Arabia: an important international activity*	The article explore religious, social and economic activities in Mecca	Peer Reviewed, CAB Direct
Atiq (2012)	*Saudisation crackdown puts hotels under pressure*	This article critically explore the hospitality industry polices, especially in the holy cities of KSA	HotilerMiddleEat.com Website
Aziz (2001)	*The Journey: an overview of tourism and travel in the Arab Islamic context*	This article overlook on the different religious tourism destination of Islamic world, from economic and social angle	Peer Reviewed, CAB E-Book
Bader (2012)	*Religious Tourism in Jordan: Current situation, future developments and prospects*	This report explores the economic value of Islamic religious tourism in Jordan	Online Newspaper article
Barrientos and Madhi (2003)	*Saudisation and employment in Saudi Arabia*	This article has identified the hospitality job sector in holy cities	Peer Reviewed Emerald
Butt (2010)	*Mecca makeover: how the hajj has become big business for Saudi Arabia*	This article critically argues how Hajj become commodity for KSA and become a massive corporation	The Online Newspaper article
Euromonitor (2009)	*Tourism flow inbounds Saudi Arabia*	This article focuses on the inbound religious tourism social and economic activities	Online Magazine
Haq and Wong (2010)	*Is spiritual tourism a new strategy for marketing Islam?*	This article suggests a new dimension in Islamic marketing and investigates spiritual tourism as a new strategy for marketing Islam as a religion.	Peer Reviewed, Emerald
Henderson (2010)	*Religious Tourism and Its Management*	This article focuses on the Hajj religious tourism operations, which	SAGE, Peer Reviewed

		included supply and chain	
Henderson (2016)	*Islamic tourism: The next big thing*	This article assessed how Islamic tourism is gaining economic boom by focusing on religious halal tourism	SAGE, Peer Reviewed
Hübner (2014)	*Religious tourism in Mecca, Saudi Arabia*	This dissertation explores how hospitality In mecca is developing as business	Online-Newspaper
Jaelani (2016)	*Islamic tourism development in Cirebon*	This article explores how an Islamic tourism destination can gain advantage from Sharia economic laws	Online Journal MPRA
Jafri and Scott (2010)	*Tourism in the Muslim World: Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice*	This article explores holistically the Muslim religious tourism issues	Emerald, Peer Reviewed
Matsangou (2015)	*Mecca's millions*	This article argues that Hajj is Recession-proof tourism	Online Magazine BD
MEED Middle East Economic Digest (2010)	*A holy city in transition*	This article identifying investment in Mecca is booming as the government seeks to improve facilities and accommodate growing visitor numbers for Hajj	Online Digest
National Commercial Bank (2009)	*The focus of Saudi hotel industry*	This report is showing the investment opportunities in hospitality sector in Mecca	Saudi Bank Report
O'Plachler (2008)	*King of the Desert*	This article is looking the investment dynamics of Mecca	Online Newspaper
Othman and Jamal (2017)	*Innovative System Indicators for Islamic Tourism Using C-PEST Factors*	This article reports how technology can be sold and enhanced in Islamic religious	Peer Reviewed, Online International Journal of Tourism and pilgrimage

		Tourism	
Qurashi (2017)	*Commodification of Islamic Religious Tourism*	This article explores in-depth how Hajj and destination of Mecca become the economic hub	Peer Reviewed, Online International Journal of religious tourism and pilgrimage
Sadi and Henderson (2005)	*Tourism in Saudi Arabia and its future development*	This article explores the opportunities of tourism in KSA including religious tourism	Online-Research Gate Website
Salam (2016)	*The Global Economic Impact of Muslim Tourism, 2015/2016*	This report explores broadly how Islamic tourism gained economic benefits from the process of globalisation	Online Annual report
Salaman (2009)	*Kingdom Eyes SR101bn Revenue from tourism*	This article explores the economic intentions of KSA government for religious tourism	Online Newspaper
Salman (2011)	*New License*	This article identified the policies of KS government for investment in hospitality and religious tourism sector of holy cities	Online Newspaper
Saudi Commission for Tourism (2005)	*Tourism Industry. A Saudi Arabian Perspective*	This article exposed the KSA mentality for religious tourism	Online SACTA Website
Sell (2009)	*Mecca defies the global trend*	This article discussed that religious tourism in KSA is recession proof	Online Newspaper
Smith (2016)	*Saudi Arabia hopes for religious tourism boost*	This article explores how KSA is boosting it religious tourism market by contemporary infrastructure development	Online Newspaper article
The Economist (2013)	*Religious tourism: Pennies from heaven*	This article emphasis on how Mecca and Hajj become a business	Online Magazine
Travel market	*Religious Tourism to*	This article	Online Magazine

Author/Date	Topic	Article/Book Focus	Publications
(2011)	*Attract 15 Million Tourists to Saudi Arabia By 2013*	discovers the inbound financial activities of religious tourism	
UNWTO (2011)	*Religious Tourism in Asia and the Pacific*	Apart from other topics of tourism, this report explores the economics of religious tourism in Asia, especially in the context of Buddhism and Islam	Online Report
Vijayanand (2012)	*Socio-Economic Impact in Pilgrimage Tourism*	This article emphasised on the Hindu and Islamic religious tourism economics	Online Article
Vukonic (2008)	*religious tourism: economic values or am empty box*	To certain extent this article argues the economic impact on Mecca and Hajj	Online Research Gate
Spirituality in Religious Tourism			
Author/Date	**Topic**	**Article/Book Focus**	**Publications**
Bilim (2016)	*The Changing Face of a Religious City: tourism and the perceptional modernisation of a host community*	This article focuses on the spiritual city of Konya (Turkey), has transform into a modern commercial city and the economic and marketing effects of religious tourism have had a positive role in this process	Online International Peer Reviewed, Journal of religious Tourism and pilgrimage
Clippard and Seth (2012)	*Protecting the Spiritual Environment: Rhetoric and Chinese Buddhist Environmentalism*	This article analyse leaders of certain Taiwanese Buddhist organisations associated with a strand of Buddhist modernism called humanistic Buddhism use discourse and rhetoric to make environmentalism meaningful to their spiritual members	Online Free Library

Ebadi (2015)	*Forms of Pilgrimage at the Shrine of Khāled Nabi, Northeastern Iran*	The article explores that Khāled Nabi shrine are not homogenous and comprise of different types of visitors, namely, "religious spiritual pilgrims", ' 'cultural pilgrims", "nostalgic pilgrims"	Peer Reviewed, Online International Journal of religious Tourism and pilgrimage
Ebadi (2016)	*Shrine Pilgrimage (Ziyārat) in Turco-Iranian Cultural Regions*	This article tries to shed more light on the tradition of spiritual shrine pilgrimage (ziyārat) in Turco-Iranian cultural milieu almost unknown within the wider community of tourism and geography researchers	Peer Reviewed, Online International Journal of religious Tourism and pilgrimage
Fatima, Naeem and Rasool (2016)	*The Relationship Between Religious Tourism and Individual's Perceptions (A case study of Hazrat Data Ghanj Bakhsh's shrine)*	The article results shows that individuals' perceptions regarding directional signage, safety and security, displays and exhibits, good value for money, and equal access have positive relationships with spiritual tourism.	Peer Reviewed, Online International Journal of religious Tourism and pilgrimage
Gunasekara (2015)	*An Analysis on Potentials of Developing Spiritual Tourism in Sri Lanka – with special reference to Buddhist Pilgrimage Activities*	This article analyse the current usage of Buddhist heritage in tourism, to find out the potentials of developing Spiritual Tourism in Sri Lanka based on Buddhism	Online Free Library
Kessler (2016)	*Mosque Tourism*	The purpose of this article is to describe and define Islamic Tourism in order to give a meaning to the	Peer Reviewed, Online International Journal of religious Tourism and pilgrimage

		term Mosque Tourism, which is one of the most important activities undertaken by Muslim spiritual tourists as a religious practice as well as a tourist activity while travelling	
Raj and Bozonelos (2015)	*Pilgrimage Experience and Consumption of Travel to the City of Makkah for Hajj Ritual*	The article focuses on the significance and value of the experience which individual pilgrims face during travel to the holy city of Mecca.	Peer Reviewed, Online International Journal of religious Tourism and pilgrimage
Sharpley (2009)	*Tourism, religion and spirituality*	This book chapter holistically explained the relation of spirituality with religion and tourism	Peer Reviewed, SAGE
Sharpley and Sundram (2005)	*Tourism: a Sacred Journey? The Case of Ashram Tourism, India*	This article identify the extent to which visitors to a specific spiritual/religious destination were motivated by a search for spiritual fulfilment as suggested by those describing tourism as a sacred journey	Peer Reviewed, International journal of Tourism Research
Experiences of Religious Tourism			
Author/Date	**Topic**	**Article/Book Focus**	**Publications**
Abahre (2016)	*Religious Tourism: Experience of Palestine*	The article argues that the peace process between Palestine and Israel may enhance the religious tourism experience among pilgrims	Online ResearchGate Website
Arasteh and Eilami (2011)	*The Role of Religion and Islam in the*	The article established	Online ResearchGate

		relationship between Islam ,tourism and pilgrim's experiences in Iran	Website
Choe and McNally (2014)	*Buddhism in the United States: an Ethnographic Study*	The article identifies the different experience and unique forms of rituals of Buddhism may be expressive of different elements of American culture	Peer Reviewed, Online International Journal of religious Tourism and pilgrimage
Chun,Roh and Spralls (2017)	*Living Like A Monk: Motivations and Experiences of International Participants in Temple stay*	This article suggest Strategies for crafting Temple stay as a cultural and monastic experience as well as segmenting and targeting international participants based on their needs	Online Research Gate Website
Kamil (2000)	*Religious tourism as big business*	The article not only focuses on the business aspect of religious tourism but how the experiences can be sold is one of the core elements of the discussion	Online Article
Scott and Jafari	*Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice*	One of the book chapter emphasising on the Pilgrim's Experience of the Asian religious destinations	Peer Reviewed, Emerald
Shackley (2001)	*Managing sacred sites: Service provision and visitor experience*	The book not only look at the western religious destination management area but also about managing Buddhist places experiences and their management	Peer Reviewed, Taylor & Francis Online
Shepherd, Yu and Huimin	*Tourism, heritage, and sacred space: Wutai Shan, China*	The article measuring tourist experience and satisfaction level of	Peer Reviewed, Taylor & Francis Online

Meaning of Authenticity in Religious Tourism		sacred spaces	
Author/Date	**Topic**	**Article/Book**	**Publications**
Baderoon (2012)	*The sea inside us': narrating self, gender, place and history in South African memories of the Hajj*	This article explores how Muslim-majority countries means that the religious authenticity granted by the hajj only	Peer Reviewed Taylor & Francis Online
Battour (2010)	*Toward a halal tourism market*	The article explores Islamic sources of legislation in lims when its authenticity is proven beyond reasonable doubt	Online Research Gate Website
Buitelaar (2015)	*The Hajj and the anthropological Study of pilgrimage*	This book chapter is addressing Hajj as their analysis of Muslim tourism, often addressing the issue of the 'authenticity' of the Mecca experience	Online University of Groningen
Cheung and Ngruyen (2015)	*Toward an Understanding of Tourists' Authentic Heritage Experiences: Evidence from Hong Kong*	This article focuses on tourists' perceptions of authenticity, and in particular how they evaluate authentic heritage experiences	Peer Reviewed, Taylor & Francis Online
Collins and Murphy (2015)	*The Hajj: An Illustration of 360-Degree Authenticity*	The chapter explores authenticity by proposing a 360-degree perspective based on tourism and philosophy literature. The Islamic religious pilgrimage or Hajj serves as an exemplary case for a proposed model.	Online Research Gate Website
Ghadami (2012)	*The role of Islam in the tourism industry*	The article explores the meaning of authenticity in the	Online Research Gate Website

		context of Islam	
Henderson (2010)	*Sharia-compliant hotels*	This article explores Islamic belief system as expressions of culture and authenticity	Peer Reviewed, JSTOR
Henig (2012)	*"This is our little hajj": Muslim holy sites and reappropriation of the sacred landscape in contemporary Bosnia*	The article argues after several decades of suppression and control, as well as post war ethnonational identity rhetoric and the proliferation of international Islamic humanitarian organizations in the country, opened public debates about the authenticity of Bosnian religious tourism	Peer Reviewed, onlinelibrary.wiley
Pond (2006)	*The appeal of Sami Yusuf and the search for Islamic authenticity*	The article explores "true" meaning of authenticity in Islam	Online Digital Islam website
Tibi (2012)	*Islamism and Islam*	The Article explores the fight for authenticity is identified within an agenda of purification	Yale University Press
Xiarhos (2016)	*Authenticity and the Cyber Pilgrim*	The article argues that what If humanity may have reached a point at which online pilgrimage or online faith worship could challenge more traditional formations of faith and practice.	Journal of Religion and Society