

## **Hierarchical Value Map of Religious Tourists Visiting Vatican City/Rome**

### **Abstract**

Constructing a hierarchical value map, a psychological structure is explored to understand how religious tourists perceive the sites they visit in terms of site attributes, the benefits religious tourists seek, and their own personal values. The sample comprised foreign tourists who visited Catholic religious sites with religious tourism as their primary purpose. Using means-end chain theory, a hierarchical value map of selected religious tourists was created. A typology comprising three prominent sets of values was discovered: religious and pious values, spiritual values, and values associated with tourism and responsibility. The most salient attribute-consequence-value (A-C-V) linkage was as follows: “the opportunity to explore the traditions and history of religious sites” (A)—“had a genuinely religious experience” (C)—“learned about the history of my religion” (C)—“enhancement of faith and spirituality” (V).

**Keywords:** Religious tourism, values, benefits, attributes, means-end chain theory, Vatican City/Rome

## **Introduction**

Religious tourism is regarded as a tourism typology in religious settings and is associated with tourists who are partially or exclusively motivated for religious reasons (Jackowski & Smith, 1992; Rinschede, 1992). For the recognition of the religious tourism phenomenon, understanding pilgrimage is inevitable. Pilgrimage is referred to as one of the oldest human mobility forms and is initiated by devout faith associated with many religions (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Jackowski & Smith, 1992). With the current trend of secularization toward religion in mundane lives, pilgrimage can also be considered a modern secular journey that has become universalized even though it has been described as a traditional religious ritual (Collins-Kreiner, 2010).

Current arguments about pilgrimages say that pilgrimage and tourism need to coexist as two parallels and may embrace diverse purposes of individuals, including but not limited to religious, spiritual, cultural, and educational purposes (Jackowski & Smith, 1992; Shackley, 2002; Smith, 1992). With the diversified possible experiences in religious travels, religious tourism has been defined as the central point of the polarity between pilgrimage and tourism—a pilgrim is likely a pious religious traveler, whereas a tourist is likely a secular vacationer (Smith, 1992). Certain studies have interest in delving into the relative motivations of tourists visiting religious sites and in identifying the boundaries between a pilgrimage and tourism (Della Dora, 2012; Eade, 1992; Pfaffenberger, 1983; Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005).

Considerable attention has been currently drawn to religious tourism as a steadily burgeoning tourism typology that has an unprecedented potential. Most religious heritage destinations worldwide, including cathedrals, sacred sites, shrines, pilgrimage centers, and religious festivals, are acknowledged as religious tourism destinations (Nolan & Nolan, 1992). In

2014, the World Tourism Organization has recognized religious tourism as an efficient sustainable development form in tourism because key religious sites worldwide are visited by 300 to 330 million visitors every year (UNWTO, 2014). Such a number represents one-fourth of the total international tourist arrivals.

Although an increasing number of tourism studies on pilgrimage comprehensively examine the religious aspects of tourism phenomena, research gaps are still discovered after a thorough literature review. First, most religious tourism studies examine generic visitors, indicating all those who visit religious sites without targeting a sample of pious tourists (Abbate & Di Nuovo, 2013; Hughes et al., 2013). Motivations and experiences of visitors vary, depending on their religiousness level, religion, and denomination (Nyaupane et al., 2015; Poria, et al., 2003; Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014). The primary motives of devout pilgrims are meditation, prayers, and religious site attendance, and/or worship. Knowledge based on cultural and historical facets is their secondary motive (Jackowski & Smith, 1992). Meanwhile, when pilgrimage itself becomes associated with tourism, such as tourism for the goal of pilgrimage, the ultimate reasons of religious tourists for visiting their religious center remain as their religious motivations regardless if they are primary or secondary. Therefore, focusing on the exploration of the overall traveling experience of religion-initiated tourists and further realization of their experience in their religious center is important.

Second, previous studies explore religious tourism in a temple (Shuo et al., 2009), a shrine (Abbate & Di Nuovo, 2013; Andriotis, 2009; Bond et al., 2015; Eade, 1992; Gesler, 1996; Krešić et al., 2013), a cathedral (Gutic et al., 2010; Hughes et al., 2013), a pilgrimage route (Lois-González & Santos, 2015; Kim et al., 2016; Lopez, 2013), or a sacred place (Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2000; Fleischer, 2000; Nyaupane et al., 2015; Poria et al., 2003). However, an

urban city can also be a key religious tourism destination. For instance, Vatican City/Rome is one of the three major pilgrimage destinations for Christians, along with Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela. Vatican City/Rome is famous as the center of the Roman Catholic Church among Christians because Vatican City and the broader city of Rome are home to numerous religious places; have an inherent religious historical background; and are rich in religious architecture, ceremonies, and descended miracle stories (Nolan & Nolan, 1992). Interestingly, although such an urban location is acknowledged as a core religious tourism destination, few empirical studies investigate religious tourists at urban religious tourism destinations.

Third, most studies to date deal with visitors in holy places without classifying their status as either domestic or international tourists. Moreover, such studies have not clearly identified the characteristics of religious tourists at an international level (Abbate & Di Nuovo, 2013; Hughes et al., 2013; Poria et al., 2003). Fourth, most religious studies have not identified the fundamental attainments of psychological states that drive religious tourism, such as the benefits and values gained through religious tourism setting experiences. Therefore, existing research fail to provide a holistic perspective on religious tourism that addresses the individual components of people's perceptions while traveling.

Another research omission is found with regard to methodology. Most religious studies use an interview method (Andriotis, 2009; Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014) or simple statistics (Collins-Kreiner & Klot, 2000; Fleischer, 2000; Poria et al., 2003). However, researchers have yet to connect concepts that demonstrate relevant relationships. Therefore, a unique structure of means-end chain theory (MEC) and its laddering technique is adopted to explore personal values that may be attained through the experience of religious tourists. MEC is used to clarify the value identification concept by detecting relationships among attributes, benefits, and values (Gutman,

1982). MEC provides an effective mechanism for identifying the role of values because motivations underlying the behavior of individuals can affect their values (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988). Finding out what religious tourists seek is necessary to understand religious tourism as a typology. Such desires can be identified through their cognitive lens (Gutman, 1990; McDonald et al., 2008).

Constructing a hierarchical value map, a psychological structure is explored through the perceptions of religious tourists on religious tourism attributes in the particular city – Vatican City/Rome, benefits sought, and values gained through their experience in the religious tourism setting. Moreover, its objectives are threefold. First, it aims to identify the important religious tourism attributes perceived by religious tourists in Vatican City and Rome. Second, it seeks to identify the perceived benefits or consequences derived from those attributes. Third, it aims to identify the perceived terminal values derived from those benefits during a religious tourism experience. Finally, we find out why religious tourism matters by adopting MEC theory and investigating the high values acquired by religious tourists in the selected urban religious destinations.

## **Literature review**

### ***Religious tourism***

In the late 1970s, early tourism studies began to address pilgrimage experiences from sociological (Cohen, 1979; Turner & Turner, 1978) and anthropological perspectives (Graburn, 1983; Pfaffenberger, 1983). Pilgrimage is known as a traditional phenomenon of religiously motivated mobility. Thus, traveling to another place by being initiated with religion and pious faith has been understood to align with pilgrimage in the tourism literature (Collins-Kreiner,

2010; Jackowski & Smith, 1992). Certain scholars researched on pure religious tourism and the characteristics of its tourists (Cohen, 1979; Poria et al., 2003; Vukonić, 2006).

However, diverse factors, including social trends, information technology and transportation development, and changes in human values modify the definition of pilgrimage (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Hyde & Harman, 2011). Thus, attempting to understand the paradigm between tourism and pilgrimage has led to a debate that differentiates and dedifferentiates pilgrims from tourists by positioning them on a continuum (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Della Dora, 2012; Eade, 1992). A traditional pilgrimage has been regarded as a physical journey in search of faith and holiness (Vukonić, 2006). Smith (1992) suggested a pilgrim-tourist continuum that places sacred and secular characteristics at opposite extremes. Religious tourism is located at the center of such a continuum, with pilgrimage and secular, and knowledge-based tourism at its opposite extremes. However, the modern connotation for the term “pilgrim” connotes a religious tourist, whereas “tourist” specifies a vacationer (Collins-Kreiner & Klot, 2000; Smith, 1992).

Thus, the border between pilgrims and tourists has become obfuscated. Cohen (1979) corroborated that a traditional pilgrimage is described as a sacred movement journey toward the sacred center of a religion, whereas modern tourism is not. Experiences of contemporary tourists are understood in various modes and are classified into a range that extends from the recreational mode for the most entertaining and pleasurable role in travel to the existential mode for quests of deep meaning and communion, with humans at the spiritual center (Cohen, 1979). Likewise, Turner and Turner (1978) outlined the characteristics of pilgrims and tourists as *“a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist”* (p. 20). The suitability of defining pilgrims and tourists on a continuum is an ongoing debate among religious tourism scholars. That is, definitions vary

according to the extent to which motivations and perceptions of travelers are sacred or secular (Collins-Kreiner & Klot, 2000; Olsen, 2010; Smith, 1992).

Another argument by Olsen (2010) specified that comparing pilgrims with tourists is meaningless if historical and social conditions are not adequately considered. For instance, the criteria used to define pilgrims and tourists have changed over time. The current archetypal pilgrim concept largely indicates pious pilgrims who made physical journeys to sacred sites during the Middle Ages. In addition, the pilgrim-tourist comparison is not globally applicable because the pilgrimage concept may differ from one region or religion to another. Visitors' perceptions of themselves at a sacred site vary according to their religion and level of belief (Collins-Kreiner & Klot, 2000; Nyaupane et al., 2015). Hence, religious tourism is analogous to a religious pilgrimage given that it can be understood as the modern pilgrimage mode that can embrace overall present phenomena containing abundant tourist experiences at religious destinations with purely religious motives (Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014).

### ***Attributes of a religious tourism site***

One of the foremost reasons why religious tourists visit sacred sites is because such locations are constructed with tangible assets that embrace religious miracles as their historical background and possess an intangible ambience that provides a spiritual meaning (Andriotis, 2009; Krešić et al., 2013; Rinschede, 1992; Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014). The importance of religious sites as tourist attractions was first acknowledged in European settings, but this recognition gradually spread to other countries worldwide (Nolan & Nolan, 1992). Nolan and Nolan (1992) characterized religious sites into three types of tourism-attraction destination: pilgrimage shrines, religious tourist attractions, and festivals with religious associations.

According to Rinschede (1992), religious tourists participate in activities at religious centers and conferences and in religious ceremonies.

However, as religious sites may also possess artistic, historical, heritage, scenic, and/or architectural significance, they can be regarded as tourist attractions at which pilgrims and tourists engage in distinct spatial behaviors (Bremer, 2006). Poria et al. (2003) analyzed tourists' patterns in visiting the Wailing Wall in Israel, and found that the Wailing Wall was considered not only a significant religious site but also a heritage site for Jewish visitors.

Certain studies investigate religious tourism attributes (Gutic et al., 2010; Hughes et al., 2013; Krešić et al., 2013) to understand how experiences of religious tourists reflect their perceptions and behaviors. Hughes and scholars (2013) evaluated and interpreted the importance and performance of cathedral service facilities as perceived by visitors. The most important and highest-performing attributes cited by visitors were displays and exhibits, the underlying setting significance, the people buried at the cathedral, the cathedral and the archbishop, directional signage in the cathedral, directional signage in the cathedral grounds, value for money, and conservation projects.

In relation to the management aspects of religious sites, Krešić, Mikulić, and Miličević (2013) explored the destination attributes of the religious shrine known as Medjugorje, a site of the Virgin Mary apparition. Information, transportation, cleanliness, accommodation and F&B facilities, hospitable staff, and friendliness of the local people were the attributes they studied. The study of Gutic et al. (2010) identified history and architecture as the top two reasons for tourists to visit English cathedrals, followed by curiosity, the pursuit of peace, and the desire for prayer. Although spiritual motives (i.e., peace and prayer) were not the main reasons for travel, the visitors often found emotional or spiritual significance in the cathedrals' peaceful, quiet, and



solitary ambience and in the opportunities they gained to pray, reflect, pay their respects, or light candles. Such finding is similar to the motives in visiting Medjugorje, which are mainly associated with devout religious activities, such as prayer, reconciliation, and confession, followed by motives, such as spiritual development, pilgrimage, site popularity and its culture and heritage.

In conclusion, the attributes of religious tourism destinations most relevant to visitors include architecture along with spiritual and religious experiences. The physical manifestations of such destinations are either ruins or continue to be used for religious purposes. In the former case, the traces of religious historical events elicit visitors' religious imagination; in the latter case, visitors are able to see, touch, and feel the aura of functioning religious sites. Interpretation services provided by guides, brochures, and/or explanatory signs help visitors to understand the history of religious buildings. The features of such destinations, physical and intangible alike, are expected to provide the benefits that visitors seek by participating in religious tourism.

### ***Religious tourism benefits***

Another important religious tourism literature segment involves the investigation of the benefits generated through religious tourism experiences in holy places (Andriotis, 2009; Bond et al., 2015; Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2000; Kamenidou & Vourou, 2015). Andriotis (2009) found that those who reported undergoing authentic spiritual experiences at a sacred site, the "Holy Mountain" in Greece, identified five essential facets of these experiences: spiritual, cultural, environmental, secular, and educational. According to Bond et al. (2015), history and culture, religion, and spirituality underpin the expectations of visitors to religious tourism sites. In participatory activities such as exploration, worship, shopping, and watching others worship,

the visitors perceived meaningfulness, historicity, peacefulness, and fun. Similarly, Kamenidou and Vourou (2015) discovered that pilgrims sought both spiritual and secular, cultural benefits.

In a study by Rodrigues and McIntosh (2014), the benefits sought by visitors to a Catholic monastery and retreat center comprised religious, personal, and social experiences. However, religious experiences were emphasized: the visitors' experiences were more likely to involve the pious practice of religion than secular or recreational tourism activities. In addition, any such experiences were undertaken for devotional purposes, and the visitors were welcomed and treated as special guests in line with the fundamental principle of monastic hospitality. Nyaupane et al. (2015) found that three groups of religious tourists visiting holy places had mixed expectations of the educational, religious, recreational, and social benefits of such visits. Clustering the tourists generated three categories: pilgrims, tourists, and travelers showing features of both identities, respectively.

Raj (2012) explored the serious religious benefits of pilgrimages, and found that religious practices, beliefs, and benefits were at the core of pilgrims' decision to travel. These perceived benefits were linked with psychological values based on the pilgrims' faith, such as love, pleasure, and the desire to engage in prayer. In an existing religious tourism context, Shuo et al. (2009) identified 28 important motives that Taoist and Buddhist visitors sought in their visits to a Taoist temple in Taiwan. Among those motives, religious experience or belief was predominant. Focusing on a sample of religious tourists, Rodrigues and McIntosh (2014) discovered that the major expectations tourists held in their visits were linked with their religion and spirituality.

Amid numerous efforts to explore religious tourists' main purposes or the benefits they seek, some scholars have attempted to determine whether the majority of pilgrims travel to religious sites for sacred or secular reasons, and to identify the consequences of joining a

pilgrimage (Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2000; Kamenidou & Vourou, 2015; Kim et al., 2016; Lois-González & Santos, 2015). Focusing on walking pilgrims on Camino de Santiago in Spain, Lois-González and Santos (2015) found that participants' main reasons for walking pilgrimage complexly combined religious, spiritual, cultural, nature-related, sports-related, and entertainment factors. These findings were consistent with the conclusion reached by Kim et al. (2016) that the values held by individuals walking this road were also close to combined values.

In another empirical study on pilgrims visiting the Holy Land, Collins-Kreiner and Kliot (2000) affirmed that pilgrims had the preconceptions of a pilgrimage site and acknowledged the importance of its spiritual meaning rather than its physical attributes. Moreover, the perceptions of pilgrims likely varied according to the denomination of their religion. The study implied that religiously motivated travelers expect to obtain certain types of sacred experiences at religious sites, and those experiences are mainly shaped by their religious beliefs and can affect their perceptions and experiences during their pilgrimage. Given the benefits religious travels offer, specific motivations activated by a religious or spiritual underpinning should be understood in relation to people's travel to religious sites (Olsen & Timothy, 2006).

### ***Perceived values of religious tourists***

A value is defined as a crucial belief that directly affects the behavior of individuals (Choe & Kim, 2018; Gutman, 1990; Pizam & Calantone, 1987). Human behavior is undertaken in line with values, which represent high and deep meanings of human desires and ultimate goals (Kim et al., 2016). Values are an important construct in understanding the travel goals of tourists because the highest attainment level comes with satisfying personal experiences (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988; Pizam & Calantone, 1987; Watkins & Gnoth, 2011). Values are also determined

by a combination of personal standards and beliefs shared by people in a society (Pizam & Calantone, 1987). Therefore, values reflect social culture, including religion, which can be manifested in conscious experiences and behaviors.

Religion is the main factor that influences the values of a group of people (Jackson & Hudman, 1995; Poria et al., 2003). Religious tourism is activated by religious motives, such as the desire for spiritual fulfillment as a high-level attainment (Bond et al., 2015; Digance, 2003). Nevertheless, few studies examine the ultimate values of religious tourists through a religious tourism experience. Bond et al. (2015) found diverse benefits of religious tourism—cognitive insight, social bonding, restoration, and personal fulfillment—to accrue from the experiences of mental engagement, connection with spirituality, emotional engagement, discovering new things, interacting and gaining a sense of belonging, and relaxing and finding peace.

Focusing on advanced benefits, Gesler (1996) found that pilgrims visiting Lourdes, France were healed in body, mind, and spirit and realized peace and happiness through their pilgrimage. Lopez (2013) revealed that the higher levels of attainment reported by pilgrims along the Camino de Santiago were freedom, solidarity, reflection, religious faith, loneliness, and happiness. Similarly, Kim et al. (2016) explored the structure of values held by walking pilgrims, and found that the main higher value attained through a walking pilgrimage was personal happiness, followed by the reinforcement of social bonds and an enhanced understanding of different cultures and countries. The Camino pilgrims highlighted not only the value of mature religious belief, but also the spiritual values such as pursuit of healthy life and quality of life.

Consequently, pertinent attributes to religious tourism can stimulate the ultimate values of religious tourists. Within means-end chain theory, values are positioned on the top of the A-C-V hierarchy, which is highly inclusive and the least specific (Pizam & Calantone, 1987).

Furthermore, people experience religious tourism for value fulfillment (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988). Although diverse previous studies have independently investigated the benefits pilgrims seek, as well as their motivations and perceptions of their destination attributes, limited efforts have been made to integrate such attributes, benefits, and values holistically into a hierarchical structure. Therefore, it is an attempt to explore the structure of values held by religious tourists visiting Vatican City and Rome to gain accurate insights into the experiences of tourists at religious sites.

## **Methods**

### ***Means-end chain theory and the hard-laddering method***

Focusing on the importance of individuals' behaviors allows the understanding of the ultimate fulfillment of their values. Means-end chain theory was adopted, which embraces three major components: attributes, consequences/benefits, and values (Gutman, 1982). The means-end chain has gained substantial attention in marketing studies because it explores why customers perceive product attributes as important and how personal values are derived from the benefits of attributes in the cognitive process (Reynolds & Gutman, 1998). The theory addresses how the specific concrete aspects of products relate to people's lives (Reynolds, 1985). Given the theoretical manifestation of personal values, means-end chain theory was employed to reflect the human mindset from a psychological micro perspective (Reynolds, 1985). It was also applied to investigate the relationship between tourism attributes and tourists' values (Klenosky, 2002; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2009).

Laddering, which is the most common method to achieve means-end chains, has three phases: salient attribute elicitation, in-depth interviews, and results analysis (Ter Hofstede et al.,

1998). First, people are questioned about attributes to evaluate their perceived importance. Second, the most importantly revealed attributes are expanded to link them with advanced benefits. The procedure begins by asking a fundamental question: “Why is that important to you?” This technique helps researchers find a balance between responses of respondents and a preexisting framework for interpretation (Gutman, 1982). Additional abstracted responses are considered to represent the “end,” —that is, values of participants—through a sequence of concepts called a ladder. Finally, attributes, benefits/consequences, and values and their linkages are indicated by frequency and represented in rows and columns in an implication matrix form (Ter Hofstede et al., 1998).

The laddering method can be applied to two distinct techniques: soft and hard laddering (Grunert & Grunert, 1995). Soft laddering, a conventional technique of conducting in-depth interviews, involves data collection from random participants, whereas hard laddering helps extract salient information while retaining the richness and complexity of the data (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Hard laddering was selected for this study because it compels each respondent to provide connections in the form of a ladder and to answer in such a way that his or her response sequence reflected perceptual elements drawn as a hierarchical structure. In the tourism context, hard laddering can also provide straightforward options for respondents who are seeking to describe their experiences succinctly. In this study, hard laddering was used to understand the target tourism typology: values of religious tourists portrayed beyond their motivations.

A hard-laddering method requires a structured questionnaire developed through an extensive literature review (Russell et al., 2004). Accordingly, the core attributes of religious travel were reviewed and carefully chosen from previous studies on experiences and motivations of religious tourists (e.g., Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2000; Kamenidou & Vourou, 2015; Raj,

2012; Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014; Shuo et al., 2009), along with attributes of religious sites (e.g., Hughes et al., 2013). Religious travel experience consequences, as identified in previous studies, were meticulously examined (e.g., Raj, 2012; Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014; Shuo et al., 2009). The high values of pilgrims were analyzed, and the List of Values was adopted (e.g., Kahle & Kennedy, 1988; Kim et al., 2016).

### ***Study design and data collection***

Vatican City and Rome were selected as study settings, as two of the major Catholic pilgrimage sites with pilgrimage routes. Rome is a world-famous city, visited by 13.5 million travelers and pilgrims in 2014 (Agenzia, 2017). Vatican City was established on the tomb of Saint Peter and is surrounded by Rome. It is the smallest sovereign state in the world and the center of Catholicism, home to the leader of the Catholic Church, the Pope (Vukonić, 2006). Vatican City and Rome are global tourism destinations; they are visited by international pleasure travelers as well as authentic pilgrims from all over the world.

Items relating to attributes of the religious sites, benefits, and values were extracted from a thorough review of the literature on religious tourism. To develop items that represented features of pilgrimage tourism to the cities, in-depth interviews with five individuals who had previously undertaken religious travel to these cities were conducted. One of the authors had also experienced a pilgrimage tour to the cities, which aided item development. Before the main survey, both a pre-test and a pilot test were conducted. In the pre-test, 15 graduate students and 2 professors majoring in/researching tourism reviewed the draft questionnaire meticulously. Based on their comments the questionnaire was modified. Next, a pilot test was carried out with 20 people who had traveled to Vatican City and Rome with pilgrimage as their main purpose. The

respondents recommended that the 2016 Jubilee of Mercy be included and that more words relating to Catholicism and specifying human compassion (e.g., “charity” and “donation”) be used. The final questionnaire consisted of 12 attributes, 12 consequences, and 6 values, enabling the development of a value map for religious tourism in Vatican City and Rome. The items are described in Table 1.

### [TABLE 1]

The questionnaire was initially developed in English. Two screening questions were used to select the target sample: *“How important was religion to your decision to travel to Vatican City/Rome?”* and *“How important was the opportunity to undertake a pilgrimage to Vatican City/Rome to your decision to come here?”* The responses to the two questions were operationalized as “not important” and “important.” Only those who answered “important” in response to both questions were selected for further analysis. Next, the respondents were asked to help construct A-C-V linkages as they proceeded with the survey.

Most of the data collection for the main survey was completed in the Catacombs of St. Callixtus, collective underground tombs for early Christians, martyrs, and popes. This sacred site is located near Vatican City and is a must-visit destination for any Christian pilgrim touring the region. The tour of the catacombs is taken by groups of approximately 6 to 10 people; each group is led by a professional guide who is interpreting the historical relics for about one hour. The survey and interview process were administered during tourists’ rest time while waiting to be picked up by a bus after leaving a memorial hall providing historical information on the catacombs. The survey was conducted in October 2016.

It was administered to foreign tourists who answered “yes” to a question asking whether the main purpose of their visit was religious tourism. Most of the respondents willingly



participated in the survey, as the questionnaire was succinct and specifically targeted religious tourists. The interviewer explained the purpose of the study and how to link attributes, benefits, and personal values. Respondents were asked to first choose the five most important attributes of their religious tourism experiences. In the second step, they were asked to link one benefit that was derived from each attribute selected. Subsequently, the selected benefit was connected to one value that explains the chosen benefit the most (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2009; Ter Hofstede et al., 1998).

An appropriate sample size is necessary for analyzing data using hard laddering to ensure validity and reliability. In previous research using a pen and pencil technique, 30 responses were used as a sample for hard laddering (Kuisma et al., 2007; Vriens & Ter Hofstede, 2000). Certain scholars argue that at least 40 responses are necessary to ensure the reliability of data analysis using this method (Russell et al., 2004; Ter Hofstede et al., 1998), whereas others use approximately 100 responses (Bagozzi & Dabholkar, 1994; Kim et al., 2016). Among 108 questionnaires collected in this study, six were ruled out because they included insincere responses with a series of missing values. Therefore, a total of 102 responses were used to construct a map of religious tourists' values. Although the respondents were asked to choose only five important attributes at the first stage, eight items were additionally selected out of 510. Therefore, a total of 518 linkages were shown as the chained ladders between attributes and consequences and between consequences and values. Figure 1 depicts the development process of the study design.

## **[FIGURE 1]**

### **Findings**

### ***Profile of respondents***

Males made up 41.2% of the sample. The majority (55.9%) were aged between 50 and 69, followed by those in their 40s (16.7%). Their responses to a question on nationality were diverse, indicating 18 countries of origin. Distributed by continent, the respondents were from Europe (42.0%), Asia (29.4%), North America (25.0%), South America (2.0%), and other continents (2.9%). When asked whether they had invited companions to join them on their pilgrimages, the highest percentages of affirmative answers were obtained for package groups (43.1%), friends (17.6%), family members (12.7%), and couples (11.8%).

The respondents indicated that their average annual household income was under US\$30,000 (34.3%), between US\$30,000 and \$50,000 (15.7%), between US\$70,000 and US\$90,000 (13.7%), or more than US\$110,000 (13.7%). The majority had received undergraduate or graduate education (46.1%), followed by postgraduate education (29.4%) and high-school education or below (17.6%). Professionals made up 21.6% of the respondents, with the same proportion marking their occupational status as “other” (21.6%); they were followed by retired people (16.7%), businesspeople (13.7%), students (9.8%), and company employees (9.8%). Respondents staying in 4- and 3-star hotels made up 34.3% and 27.5% of the group, respectively. This time, the average duration of their entire trips was nine nights, and that of their trips in Vatican City and Rome was five nights.

The responses to the questions designed to gain insight into the respondents’ religion-related characteristics were as follows. Approximately 77% self-identified as Roman Catholic, followed by Protestant (20.0%) and Orthodox (1.0%). About 53% reported that they were traveling to Vatican City/Rome and other Italian cities, followed by 35.5% who were traveling to Vatican City/Rome alone. They attended services at churches/cathedrals every week (62.7%), at

least once per year (15.7%), and once every 3 years (12.7%). When asked how many times they had undertaken religious travel before this visit, the majority answered “once” (36.3%), followed by “more than five times” (25.5%), “never” (15.7%), “three times” (11.8%), and “four times” (2.9%). When asked to specify their levels of religious belief and experience while on the tour, they gave high scores: 4.01 and 4.00 out of 5.00, respectively.

### ***Results of means-end analysis***

Data collected to develop a series of associated matrices were analyzed by using the association pattern technique designed by Ter Hofstede et al. (1998). An attribute-consequence matrix and a consequence-value matrix showing A-C combinations and C-V combinations are presented in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. In Table 2, 12 attributes are shown in columns and 12 consequences in rows, with the frequencies of linkage between individual attributes and consequences indicated in the intersections. Similarly, Table 3 shows the linkages between 12 consequences in columns and 6 values in rows.

### **[TABLES 2 AND 3]**

Based on the implication matrices, 6 of 12 attributes, 8 of 12 benefits/consequences, and 6 of 6 values were identified from the hierarchical value map in Figure 2. This shows the most important values, followed by the consequences and the particular attributes perceived by the religious tourists as important, with a cut-off level of 13. Via the A-C and C-V matrices, first, the important attributes of the respondents’ religious travel, relating to the nature of their religious tourism and the particular destination, Vatican City/Rome, were investigated. Next, these attributes were used to identify the benefits drawn by attributes. Further, ultimate personal values closely linked are identified. In a value-structure map such as the one shown in Figure 2, each

component size represents the degree of importance, and the line thickness is the degree of linkages. This map facilitates a clear understanding of important components at the three levels—attributes, consequences, and values. Moreover, it supports an understanding of attained ultimate values through obtained benefits and given opportunities by targeted religious tourists.

## **[FIGURE 2]**

First, the three most salient attributes of 12 identified were the traditions and history of religious sites; religious architecture and artwork conservation; and a holy atmosphere for confession, penance, purification, and repentance. These three attributes are strong representative features of the cities under study since Roman Catholics and Catholic traditions have significantly influenced the course of European history and politics (Vukonić, 2006). These findings are consistent with those of studies that have classified religious tourism as a type of special-interest tourism akin to cultural tourism and/or heritage tourism (Hughes et al., 2013; Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Shackley, 2002).

An appropriately holy atmosphere for confession, penance, purification, and repentance, as activities that can be performed during religious tourism, is essential. This finding is also similar to the observation made in previous studies that visitors to monasteries and religious retreat centers are motivated by a desire to connect with their religion and have mainly religious experiences such as reflection through prayer in the holy atmosphere provided by the devotional nature of the pious place (Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014; Shackley, 2002). The desire for a holy atmosphere can explain the importance of religion and faith in understanding the experience of religious tourists. The spiritual atmosphere at religious sites is likely perceived as a recreational or cultural experience by those who have a different religious affiliation, whereas such atmosphere is perceived as a crucial motivation and goal for a visit by those with the same

religious affiliation and faith as that of the sites being visited (Nyaupane et al., 2015; Olsen, 2010). In terms of religious tourists whose faith is in the same religious affiliation as the one associated with sacred sites, prayer is certainly acknowledged as a core activity. Moreover, such sites provide religious services—worship opportunities, choir performances, and religious ceremonies, such as a Catholic mass (Nolan & Nolan, 1992). This result validates that religious tourists still regard religious activities and their benefits as significant.

In addition to the three attributes, the cathedral in which Pope Francis presides over many liturgical events and greetings for pilgrims (St. Peter's Basilica) and touristic attributes—the friendliness of the local people and traditional local foods—were selected as important attributes. For 1.2 billion Catholics worldwide, the most representative and significant cathedral in the world is St. Peter's Basilica, which is located at the center of Vatican City and Rome. The place has a special meaning as the papal enclave within the city, enabling religious tourists to see and greet the popular and charismatic religious leader in person (Lanuza, 2017). In addition, traditional foods are still perceived by religion-motivated travelers as an important antecedent of understanding different cultures abroad and a key factor determining destination attractiveness (Chhabra et al., 2003; Hou et al., 2005).

Another primary attribute is the friendliness of the local people. Hospitality is identified as an important component in religious tourism. It refers to the general concept of natural service and warm-hearted reception extended toward guests and as a welcoming atmosphere for strangers (Brotherton, 1999). Moreover, hospitality plays an integral spiritual and social role in monasteries and has its roots in Christianity (Pohl, 1999; Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014; Vukonić, 2006). The Catholic Church also perceives hospitality as a representation of the spirit of its traditions (Vukonić, 2006). The majority of religious sites are managed by clergy, such as

monks, nuns, and priests, who devote their lives to their faith and who work for religious organizations without a secular purpose. Therefore, this finding proves that hospitality itself—in this context, hosting visitors at sacred sites—is a fundamental pilgrimage element.

The most important benefits perceived by religious tourists were the opportunities they gained to visit historical cathedrals and churches, to explore ancient architecture and artworks, to experience a different culture, to learn about the history of religion, and to have a genuine religious experience. They tended to favor aspects of culture and heritage, a rich historical background, and a pure religious experience. Studies have also shown that experiences at sacred shrines have historical, cultural, educational, religious, and spiritual facets (Andriotis, 2009; Bond et al., 2015; Krešić et al., 2012). The findings of the current study indicate that the key benefits of religious tourism experiences are the opportunities provided to visit consecrated churches, explore historical architecture and artworks, experience a different culture, learn the history of one's religion (here Catholicism), and have a religious experience.

It was discovered that the most prominent of six values highlighted by the religious tourists while traveling was the enhancement of faith and spirituality, which studies have also identified as a consequence of pilgrimage to sacred shrines (Andriotis, 2009; Kamenidou & Vourou, 2015; Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014). The second most salient value was a sense of religious belonging, which was completely religion-oriented. This was followed by four values: a sense of self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment, personal happiness, fun and enjoyment, and compassion for other human beings. These three sets of values were categorized as religious and pious values, spiritual values, and touristic and responsible values.

These findings can be compared with those of Rodrigues and McIntosh (2014), who discovered that visitors to a Catholic monastery reported religious, personal, and social

experiences, of which religious experiences were the most profound. Although the latter study explored overall visitors to a religious site, its results are similar to those of the current study because the monastery was reported to be wholly pious and the visitors undertook devout religious practices and self-identified as religious individuals.

In addition to the previously identified relevant religious values, a sense of self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment and personal happiness were the second most important personal values reported. Similarly, Kim et al. (2016) found that happiness was the most significant value obtained through a walking journey along the 850km pilgrimage route of Camino de Santiago in Spain. This is also consistent with the finding of previous studies that the main perceptions emerging from religious tourism experiences are personal fulfillment and restoration (Bond et al., 2015), inner peace and happiness (Gesler, 1996), and reflection and happiness (Lopez, 2013). This result supports some researchers' observation that visiting a religious place is akin to having an encounter with the holy, which constituted a spiritual calling for worshippers in an earlier age but no longer motivates cultural tourists (Shackley, 2002; Vukonić, 1992). In other words, although tourists at religious sites may self-identify as "pilgrims," not all are religiously motivated, as they report a combination of reasons for travel (e.g., cultural, spiritual, religious, environmental, educational, and sports-related reasons).

Fun and enjoyment were collectively identified as the third most significant value. This finding is similar to those of previous studies in which secular values such as fun and entertainment emerged from visiting religious sites and making pilgrimages (Bond et al., 2015; Lois-González & Santos, 2015). Religious tourism has been defined as a distinct type of tourism, usually motivated by religious factors (Hudman & Jackson, 1992; Jackowski & Smith, 1992, Pfaffenberger, 1983; Rinschede, 1992; Vukonić, 1992), as tourism scholars have become

increasingly interested in identifying the similarities and differences between pilgrims and tourists (Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2000; Della Dora, 2012; Fleischer, 2000; Jackowski & Smith, 1992; Smith, 1992).

## **Discussion and implication**

~~The ultimate pursuits of religious tourists in undertaking religious tourism experiences was inquired. Accordingly,~~ It was aimed to understand the values of religious tourists by revealing how religious tourism attributes afford their experiences and salient values in a hierarchical value map using the theoretical model provided by means-end chain theory. The most highlighted value was the “enhancement of faith and spirituality” and was drawn from four experiences as benefits—having a genuinely religious experience, visiting historical cathedrals and churches, coming closer to God, and learning about the history of religion. With regard to the faith and spirituality of visitors, the most salient religious tourism component was identified as the traditions and histories of religious sites in Vatican City/Rome—~~aspects that have been established for centuries.~~

Tourism studies verify that heritage site history provides tourists with cognitive, affective, and reflective benefits by enabling them to gain knowledge and understanding of places, as well as by eliciting nostalgia or pleasure (Jewell & Crofts, 2002; Kim & Kim, 2018; Kim, Kim & Petrick, in press; McIntosh, 1999). However, religious tourists also undergo genuine religious experiences since they encounter religious traditions and history, thereby enhancing their faith and spirituality. Religious sites are worship places. Moreover, rich religious traditions and a long religious history tend to increase the sacred resonance of a religious site (Woodward, 2004). This result implies that the traditions and history of religious sites play



important roles in enriching the faith and spirituality of individuals although historical and heritage buildings at religious sites have become must-visit places simply as historical locales.

The second most salient value was the sense of religious belonging, which is consistent with the same attributes and experiences that determine faith and spirituality values specified above (St. Peter's Basilica and the opportunity to visit historical cathedrals and churches) as the two also converge to give the sense. Reflecting on life in a religious atmosphere emerges as a unique experience that religious tourists perceive. This scenario shows that the rich traditions and historical backgrounds of religious sites gave the religious tourists in the study a chance to learn about the history of their religion in depth, which, in turn, fostered a strong sense of connection with their religion. Religious tourists are expected to experience a high degree of religiosity and feel a sense of affiliation with places associated with their religion (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004).

In addition, sacred sites receive an increase in attention in religious, cultural, and historical dimensions (Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014). Among the several possible experiences of visitors at sacred sites, a religious experience is a notable religious tourism feature (Fernández, 2015; Rodrigues & McIntosh, 2014). St. Peter's Basilica, the cathedral of interest of the sampled tourists, is located at the center of Vatican City and Rome. It is the representative of Catholicism. The marvelous ambience of this religious center is a major attribute of its spiritual prominence among those of religious faith.

Another value highlighted through the religious tourism experience was the perceived mental state of self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment that emerges from three distinct benefits: visiting historical cathedrals and churches, exploring splendid ancient architecture and artworks, and rejuvenating oneself spiritually and physically. In a similar vein, happiness is a value

attained by visiting historical churches markedly related to the architecture and artworks of a religious site. This value can be consistently explained by the finding that tourists seeking heritage and culture values gain the ultimate satisfaction value through heritage tourism experiences (Ioannides & Ioannides, 2002; Jewell & Crofts, 2002). Religious tourism possesses an intersectional element with cultural tourism (Rinschede, 1992). The cultural elements of religious tourism, in turn, shape the happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment of religious tourists.

Subsequently, fun and enjoyment were identified as high attainment derived from experiencing a different culture by means of tasting traditional local foods. This result affirmed that local food is a component of experiencing different cultures and thus eventually fulfills enjoyment and pleasure values (Choe & Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2012; Kim, et al., 2016). The importance of local food is generally acknowledged in tourism studies because food offers an opportunity to savor authentic cultures during travel (Sims, 2009).

Given these linkages and their relative importance, the most significant values are deemed to be religiously oriented, followed by spiritually focused and tourism-related values. The linkages show which attributes affect personal values and how such personal values are pursued. They all assert that religious tourists these days are motivated by sacred and/or secular factors to undertake pilgrimages or visit religious sites. However, these results also clearly confirm that an emphasis on religious attributes reflects purely religious motives and that an emphasis on touristic attributes reflects secular motives.

The values of religious tourists are attained through the experiences of religious tourism and destinations themselves, which offer religious tourists unique attributes that other tourism destinations may not provide. Of various touristic attributes, those generating high levels of attainment are religious and spiritual. However, religious tourism has been underestimated as

merely part of the overarching category of tourism at religious sites, and religion-initiated motivations these days are regarded as less important than in medieval times (Rinschede, 1992). Nevertheless, the results clearly proved that religious tourism should itself be regarded as a tourism typology because it contains the multiple facets of tourism (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Shackley, 2002). The experiences gained through religious tourism and visiting religious tourism destinations may emphasize heritage (e.g., United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization World Heritage Sites; relics; and treasures), culture, spirituality, religion, and/or touristic and responsible features. International religious tourists undertake religious travel on an international scale. Thus, they likely enjoy their destinations as unique providers of cultural and historical experiences.

Nevertheless, religious sites and architecture are more than just historical buildings and architecture. They are sacred places consecrated by religious belief and faith, as well as long history and tradition (Vukonić, 2006). Religious tourists visiting certain places feel that they became closer to God than before, gained the opportunity to reflect on their lives in a religious atmosphere, and rejuvenated themselves spiritually and physically (Digance, 2003; Morinis, 1992). Therefore, religious tourists undergo experiences that can fulfill their religious desires.

Academically, the typology of purely religious tourists is clarified by exploring their perceptions of attributes, benefits, and values associated with religious tourism. It was helped to fill an omission in previous studies on religious tourism by examining a sample of actual religious tourists. The use of the means-end model was conducive to understanding the A-C-V hierarchy. It enabled the exploration of the hierarchical connections among the three components and revealed how concrete goals lead to abstract ones through cognitive thinking. Another

academic contribution was the opportunity to understand the kaleidoscopic psychological mentality of humans well through visual pictures of A-C-V linkages.

The results led to managerial implications for destination marketers and tourism businesses. An understanding of religious tourists' perceptions of their own motivations, benefits, and values helps tourism policymakers, destination-management organizations, and travel agents to develop appropriate marketing strategies that target tourists based on distinctive A-C-V linkages. Although tourists who join pilgrimage journeys seem to have similar utility levels, they likely perceive different benefits and seek to fulfill different values. Therefore, it is elucidated that segmenting a group of religious tourists into small cohorts and tailoring marketing strategies to their distinct needs are possible. For instance, those who consider food consumption important in a sacred destination ultimately seek fun and enjoyment. Religious tourists clearly have a keen interest in local food. Thus, travel agencies can incorporate culinary tours into religious travel itineraries.

### **Conclusions and suggestions for future study**

A hierarchical analytical method was used to detect the values of religious tourists through examining their perceived attributes and benefits of religious tourism. The highest attainment levels of religious tourists in Vatican City and Rome were the fulfillment of religious and pious values, the enhancement of faith and spirituality, and a sense of religious belonging. The second most salient values were the spiritual outcomes of personal happiness and self-fulfillment. The least salient values were those associated with tourism and with responsibility—fun and enjoyment, and compassion for others, respectively.

In a religious tourism setting, religious tourists can be categorized as individuals who have religious needs and desires related to their religion (Olsen & Timothy, 2006; Weidenfeld, 2005). They usually have primary or secondary religious motives, and their central goal is a religious destination (Cohen, 1979). Moreover, true pilgrims can be identified by their mode of travel and primary motives (Jackowski & Smith, 1992). For a tourism experience in a religious setting, the individuals' strength of religious belief and affiliation are the key antecedents that affect emotional involvement, site attachment, and future intention to visit (Poria et al., 2003).

The findings address which sets of values religious tourists have realized through their religious travel experiences: religious, spiritual, and tourism-related values. These values are addressed to understand the point that religious tourists, their religion-related motives, and specific connection with their religion while traveling should be at least premised on the notion of religious tourism (Olsen & Timothy, 2006). Apart from the overall tourism phenomena that are experienced by people visiting religious heritage sites and are associated with overall motivations initiated by the entire spectrum of visitors, characterizing religious tourists by assessing their level of religious belief and the importance of their religiousness is necessary when they embark on their journeys to centers of religion (Krešić et al., 2013; Poria et al., 2003).

There are a few limitations. First, only the hard-laddering method was used to collect data. Future researchers should apply the soft-laddering method to determine whether the findings are similar or dissimilar. Second, although the study identified the attributes, benefits, and values arising from a special attachment to place, it neglected to connect psychological outcomes with the meanings of religious places. Therefore, future research should assess the distinction between attachment to a place and sense of place within the typology of religious tourists. Third, the results may vary according to tourists' religion and the relative sacredness of

the places investigated. Future researchers should apply the same method to other religious believers and other places to determine whether the results are similar or different.

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Table 1. List of attributes, consequences, and values

	Attributes (A)		Consequences (C)		Values (V)
A1	The opportunity to explore the traditions and history of religious sites.	C1	I had a genuinely religious experience.	V1	Personal happiness
A2	The opportunity to explore the cathedral where Pope Francis presides over many liturgical events and greetings.	C2	I learned about the history of my religion.	V2	Fun and enjoyment
A3	The opportunity to explore lasting miracle stories at religious sites.	C3	I visited historical cathedrals and churches.	V3	Enhancement of faith and spirituality
A4	The opportunity to explore charisma of saints at each shrine.	C4	I devoted myself to worship and prayer.	V4	Sense of self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment
A5	The opportunity to experience a holy atmosphere conducive to confession, penance, purification, and repentance.	C5	I completed acts of repentance and purification.	V5	Sense of religious belonging
A6	The opportunity to go on a pilgrimage to experience the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy 2016.	C6	I came closer to God.	V6	Compassion for human beings (e.g., charity, donations).
A7	The opportunity to explore tremendous religious architecture and well-conserved artworks.	C7	I rejuvenated myself spiritually and physically.		
A8	The opportunity to engage in worship and join other services at religious sites (e.g., the Rosary or the Stations of the Cross).	C8	I escaped from the pressures of ordinary life.		
A9	The opportunity to join religious festivals and events.	C9	I reflected on my life in a religious atmosphere.		
A10	The opportunity to experience the friendliness of local people while on a pilgrimage.	C10	I explored ancient architecture and artworks.		
A11	The opportunity to taste traditional local food.	C11	I shared my experiences with other believers.		
A12	The opportunity to stay in a comfortable hotel.	C12	I experienced a different culture.		

Table 2. Attribute-consequence matrix

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	
C1	<b>34</b>	4	3	1	5	1	1	1					50
C2	<b>25</b>	8	12	5			4	1					55
C3	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	10	10	3	3	<b>18</b>		1		1	1	87
C4	2	3	1	6	7	6		1					26
C5		3	1		10	5		2					21
C6		3	3	10	<b>13</b>	8		5	4				46
C7		1	3	8	6	6	2	6	1	1	1		35
C8		1		1	3	2	3	1	1	3	6	2	23
C9	3	1	3	2	4	9	7	8	3	3			43
C10	4	3	2		1	1	<b>41</b>	3		2	1	1	59
C11		1			3	3	2	2	3	2			16
C12			1		1			1	1	<b>17</b>	<b>31</b>	5	57
	86	50	39	43	56	44	78	31	14	28	40	9	518

**Note:** Linkages occurring at a frequency exceeding the cut-off of 13 are highlighted in bold.

Table 3. Consequence-value matrix

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	
V1	5	9	<b>15</b>	7	3	9	6	6	4	7	4	7	82
V2	1	6	12				1	9	1	<b>14</b>		<b>24</b>	68
V3	<b>38</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	6	8	<b>14</b>	3		11	7			122
V4	3	9	<b>16</b>	5	2	4	<b>14</b>	5	4	<b>15</b>	2	3	82
V5	2	17	<b>17</b>	5	4	<b>15</b>	6	1	15	12	5	7	106
V6	1	1	6	3	4	3	5	2	8	4	5	<b>16</b>	58
	50	55	88	26	21	45	35	23	43	59	16	57	518

*Note:* Linkages occurring at a frequency exceeding the cut-off of 13 are highlighted in bold.

Figure 1. Study design process

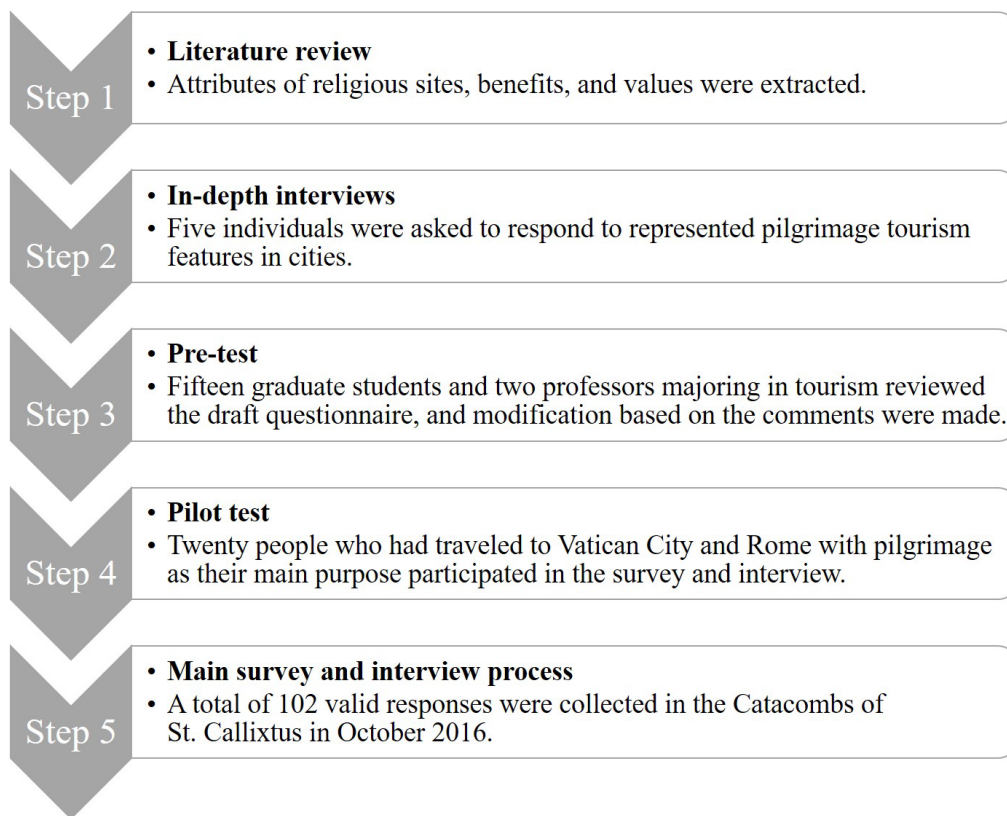
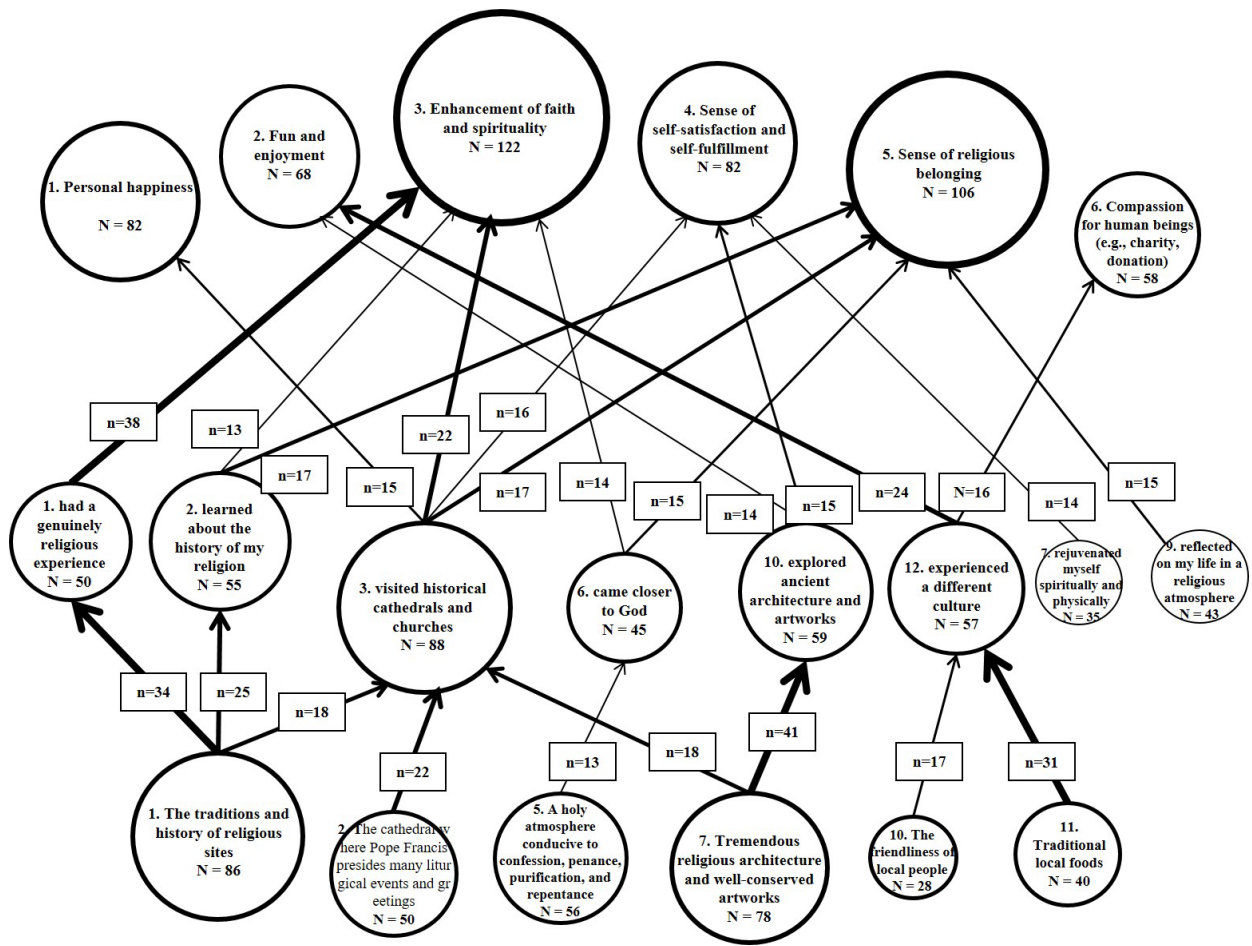


Figure 2. Hierarchical value map



*Note:* cut-off level = 13.