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Riegel, Ulrich; Lindner, Konstantin

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Visit Motivation of Tourists in Church Buildings: Amending the Phelan-Bauer-Lewalter Scale for Visit Motivation by a Religious Dimension

Ulrich Riegel^a and Konstantin Lindner^b

University of Siegen, Siegen, Germany; University of Bamberg, Bamberg, Germany

ABSTRACT

People often visit churches for touristic reasons. Studies indicate that these tourists share both secular motives and religious ones. An instrument to assess these motives, however, still is not available. This paper addresses that desideratum by amending the Phelan-Bauer-Lewalter-Scale for Visit Motivation (PBLs-VM) by (a) engaging with religious practice inside the church, (b) feeling the presence of God, and (c) experiencing subjective-life spirituality. Tourists in nine major cathedrals across Germany completed the amended PBLs-VM ($N=771$; age: $M=46$, $SD=18.04$; 58% females). Leaving out the sub-scale social enjoyment, the amended PBLs-VM^R shows a very moderate model-fit ($RMSEA=.067$, $CFI=.93$, $SRME=.052$). The observed mean differences in the sub-scales are plausible. In consequence, the amended PBLs-VM^R represents a step further in the assessment of tourists' motivation in visiting church buildings. Research using this measurement tool contributes to a better understanding of the cultural relevance of Christian heritage in modern societies.

KEYWORDS

Quantitative methods; visit motivation; culture; church buildings; tourism; religion

Introduction

In Western societies, church buildings are part of the cultural heritage. Often people visit churches for touristic reasons. For instance, Cologne Cathedral is visited by about 6 million people, the *Frauenkirche* at Dresden by about 2 million or Bamberg Cathedral by up to 1.5 million people each year. This touristic effect of church buildings, however, is not restricted to urban areas. Also rural areas benefit from church buildings. At Altenberg (North-Rhine Westfalia), Bad Staffelstein (Bavaria) or Ratzeburg (Schleswig-Holstein), for example, more than .5 million people visit the minsters each year. Even more, in rural areas church buildings often represent one of the few touristic hotspots. While big cities normally are rich with cultural artefacts to visit, in rural areas such attractions are rare. In this situation, a church building might be the single reason for tourists to visit. This makes it even more important to know why people are stopping to visit the local church building.

Normally touristic visits happen when no religious service takes place. The sightseers enjoy the particular atmosphere of the building, its magnificent architecture, its masterpieces of art, or to be at a spot marked as a local must-see. Moreover, visitors of church buildings may learn about architecture, culture and history, too, as many of the building's artefacts refer to such issues. All these reasons to visit churches address the cultural dimension of these buildings. In this regard, church buildings are very much like museums. Church buildings, however, are more than museums. In first place, these buildings are meant as locations where the adherents of a particular religious tradition come together and celebrate their belief by participating in various forms of worship or praying for themselves in silence. Both the floor plan of the building and its artefacts are designed to serve its liturgical functions. The motifs of the church's decoration depict biblical stories and individuals who represent role models for devout living relevant for the denomination's doctrine, e.g. saints or religious leaders. Moreover, particular spaces inside the church are meant for private worship and meditation. Apart from purely touristic interests, people may visit churches to attend a service, to feel the presence of God, to remember dead relatives by lighting a candle, or to find inner rest. In this regard, churches represent religious buildings in which people practise their faith. As such, churches are clearly different from museums.

Research on the reasons why people visit church buildings is scarce, particularly on occasions when no religious service is taking place. In Great Britain, some studies indicate that the majority of visitors tend to be motivated by historical and architectural rather than spiritual reasons (Hughes, Bond, & Ballantyne, 2013; Jackson & Hudman, 1995; Shackley, 2006; Winter & Gasson, 1996). The more prominent the church building is the more important become historical and architectural reasons. Particularly cathedrals seem to be touristic hotspots which attract an international audience for primarily cultural reasons.

However, the dichotomous distinction between spiritual versus cultural motives seems to be too simple to encapsulate visitor motivation comprehensively. For instance, Voase (2007) analysed group discussions of church visitors for touristic reasons to get insight into the consumer experience of these people. The findings indicate that most of the experience was primarily emotional. Churches seem to be locations with a special atmosphere. Moreover, many of the visitors connected these experiences with personal narratives. Such narratives tend to be a useful paradigm for conceptualising the predispositions by which individuals frame their visit.

Another study by Gutic, Caie, and Clegg (2010) analysed the motives of visitors to Chichester Cathedral by a self-administered questionnaire, with 350 visitors completing the questionnaire. The main reasons to visit Chichester Cathedral have been in history (26%), architecture (23%), and curiosity (19%). All other motives are less important: 14% of the respondents visited the cathedral for spiritual reasons like finding inner peace or to pray. However, the task of characterising the cathedral by a maximum of three adjectives resulted in a huge portion of adjectives used being categorised by Gutic et al. (2010) as spiritual. In consequence, the authors speculate that 'more than a third of visitors to Chichester Cathedral appear to be motivated by a subconscious search for a spiritual experience, hidden by rational motives such as interest in history' (Gutic et al., 2010, p. 750).

This finding is supported by a study of 2327 visitors of St Davids Cathedral, Wales, by Francis, Annis, Robbins, ap Siôn, and Williams (2012). According to their results, 42% of the visitors of this cathedral felt the presence of God, even if they did not enter the church for spiritual reasons. The authors conclude: 'Although many visitors may access the cathedral in pursuit of exploring the national heritage, the power of the Cathedral itself opens up as a window onto spiritual experience' (Francis et al., 2012, pp. 141–142). Moreover, Williams, Francis, Robbins, and Annis (2007) found that visitors who entered a cathedral for historical or architectural reasons in the first place went away disappointed from this location if they did not have some sort of emotional experience during their stay. All three studies, Gutic et al. (2010), Francis et al. (2012) and Williams et al. (2007), indicate that the spiritual dimension of church buildings may exert some performative power on the visitor, or that the visitors expect such performative power.

In a meta-study Olson (2013, p. 46) reports two typologies which also indicate a more complex picture of the typical church visitor. According to Davies (1992), there are four types of cathedral visitors: those who come for non-religious reasons and end up with some spiritual experience ('gawpers'), those who get upset when being confronted with doctrinal issues during their visit ('cultural despisers'), those who fill in prayer cards ('prayer-makers'), and those who hold strongly to their belief ('true believers'). The second typology from Hughes et al. (2013) identifies five types of cathedral visitors: 'explorers' who have a general cultural interest in the site, 'facilitators' who visit cathedrals to learn and to have some nice experience, 'hobbyists' who come to cathedrals because of their professional interests, 'experience seekers' who visit cathedrals because one has to be there, and 'rechargers' who visit cathedrals for spiritual reasons. Both typologies respect the two core dimensions of church visits – namely the cultural dimension and the spiritual/religious one – to make up their typology. And both typologies indicate that both dimensions may be addressed intentionally as well as by chance.

In a recent project in Germany and Switzerland, Rebenstorf and Körs (2018) analysed the motives of visitors to city churches. A city church is characterised by a cultural and spiritual relevance that attracts a bigger audience than the local community. Normally city churches are masterpieces of art and architecture and therefore touristic hotspots. In twelve such churches, Rebenstorf and Körs invited visitors to complete a questionnaire containing an instrument with 15 motives for calling at the relevant church; 6449 people took part in this query. The three motives with the highest endorsement were the historic relevance of the building (60%), its impressive architecture (55%), and the particular atmosphere inside the building (53%). Religious motives were less important. About one-third of the visitors are generally interested in issues of beliefs and religion (34%); 28% visited the church to pray or to light a candle, 26% did so because they are religious, and 23% called at the church because it is a spiritual location (Rebenstorf & Körs, 2018, p. 96). A principal factor analysis identified five factors: one representing religious motives, one signifying a cultural interest, one referring to the atmosphere of the building, one indicating a visit on purpose, and one representing a visit by chance. Further analysis indicates that the importance of the religious factor is positively correlated to both the number of visits to the particular church and to living in the neighbourhood of this church (Rebenstorf & Körs, 2018, pp. 100–105). Some of this correlation may be explained by the fact that Rebenstorf and Körs have included visitors from the local religious community in their survey. Moreover, it is quite reasonable that religious and atmospheric

motives are more important to local people than to visitors from abroad because they are already familiar with the building's architecture and historic background. All in all the findings of this study indicate that the motivation to visit churches is more complex than a dichotomous concept of cultural versus spiritual motives is able to represent comprehensively.

Then there are some studies that analyse the personal predictors of church visitors for touristic reasons. For instance, Williams et al. (2007) found that visitors who attended church services on a weekly basis tend to have a more favourable impression of a cathedral in terms of atmosphere and reported higher rates of emotional experiences regarding sensing the presence of God than visitors who went to church services occasionally or rarely. Then Francis, Williams, Annis, and Robbins (2008) and Francis et al. (2012) found that St Davids Cathedral, Wales, tends to attract visitors who prefer introversion and look for solitude and contemplation rather than for exciting experiences, and who prefer feeling and value interpersonal relationship rather than objective judgements. Extravert visitors are clearly under-represented when compared to the portion of extraverts in the UK's population. Further on the findings indicate that the information provided by this cathedral (leaflets, guidebooks, bookshop) is more frequently used by individuals who focus on specific and detailed facts (sensing types) rather than by those who focus more on an overall picture of the cathedral (intuitive types).

Summarising this scarce empirical evidence of visitor motivation to church buildings for touristic reasons brings about two desiderata of relevant research. First, the cultural and the spiritual dimension are two basic characteristics of visitor motivation in regard to church buildings but are not able comprehensively to represent this motivation. Second, there is no established instrument to assess these motives. For instance, Francis et al. (2008) work with a 45-item instrument which results in two reliable scales. The first scale is about facts and information and measures responses to the quality of the church's information material. The second scale represents the feelings and the atmospheric experience inside the church building. Both scales hardly refer to the cultural and spiritual dimensions of such visits. Later on, Francis, Mansfield, Williams, and Village (2010) developed the *Visitor Expectation Scales* (VET). This instrument comprises eight sub-scales representing the psychological types of *introversion*, *extraversion*, *sensing*, *intuition*, *feeling*, *thinking*, *perceiving* and *judging*. Each sub-scale has six items which comprise an instrument of 48 items. Nonetheless, being based on psychological type theory the VET does not refer to the religious dimension of the church building. Then, Rebenstorf and Körs (2018) offer 15 items without informing about any conceptual background of this list. In consequence, the five factors derived from this instrument represent some accidental issues rather than a comprehensive model of visitor motivation.

The project presented in this paper addresses the latter desideratum by adjusting the Phelan-Bauer-Lewalter-Scale for Visit Motivation (PBLs-VM) to church visits for touristic reasons. Its goal is to establish an instrument that is both grounded in strong theory and assesses the motivation of tourists to visit a church comprehensively. It does so by amending the PBLs-VM by a religious dimension. In the following, we will describe the theoretical background of this amendment and the method of the study.

Theoretical Background and Research Questions

This study takes churches as both religious buildings and cultural artefacts. It is based on the assumption that particularly on touristic tours such buildings are visited predominantly for cultural reasons. Church buildings, however, offer their religious or spiritual aura also to participants of touristic tours. That raises the question whether this dimension of the building is triggering the religious motives of tourists as well as cultural motives. We are not able to test this assumption because a relevant instrument is missing. Therefore this project amended the established Phelan-Bauer-Lewalter-Scale for Visit Motivation (Phelan, Bauer, & Lewalter, 2018) by religious items and tested the structural consistency of the amended instrument as well as its validity.

From a theoretical perspective, religion is a multi-faceted concept (Clarke, 2012; Paloutzian, 2015). For example, Stark and Glock (1968) identifies five characteristic dimensions making up religion as a whole: an experiential dimension, an intellectual dimension, an ideological dimension, a ritual dimension and an ethical dimension. In terms of church visits, the experiential and the ideological dimensions are of particular interest as well as the ritual one. The intellectual dimension is also of interest in regard to visiting church buildings, but this dimension is already represented in the PBLs-VM, insofar as this instrument assesses learning interest. In the Christian ideological perspective God is close to God's adherents and the church building is one principal location in which to experience that presence. In consequence, visitors on touristic tours may also enter churches to feel the presence of God. In ritual terms, churches are locations of religious practice. On touristic tours, individual forms of religious practice like praying or lighting a candle are likely reasons for visit motivation, while collective forms like attending a service are very unlikely candidates. Therefore, visitors on touristic tours may enter churches also to engage in some religious practice on an individual level. Besides this multi-dimensional concept of religion, recent sociological research distinguished between a religious dimension and a spiritual one (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). While religion refers to traditional belief in a transcendent reality and communal forms of adhering to this deity, spirituality represents an individualised form of faith predominantly directed to the individual self and integrated with a holistic worldview (Streib & Hood, 2013). Such subjective-life-spirituality may trigger church visits, too. In this case, the individual enters the church building not to feel God's presence but to find inner rest, to enjoy the particular atmosphere, and to meditate.

This theoretical background generates three different religious motives why tourists may visit a church building: (a) for engaging in some religious practice; (b) for feeling the presence of God; and (c) for experiencing subjective-life-spirituality. Adjusting the PBLs-VM for assessing the visit motivation of people entering a church for touristic reasons means amending this instrument by these three dimensions. However, doing so raises the question of whether tourists on a church visit are aware of these dimensions by themselves. An obvious counter-assumption may argue that the three-dimensional perspective on religion is too elaborate and tourists on church visits show a one-dimensional or two-dimensional religious motivation. Alternatively one may suppose that on touristic trips to churches religion is not an issue at all. Therefore, our first research question reads:

RQ1: Which is the internal structure of the amended PBLs-VM?

Having reconstructed the internal structure of the amended PBLs-VM we test its model fit and compare it with the model fit of the original instrument on our sample. These results indicate to what degree the empirical dimensions resemble the data. This brings about the second research question:

RQ2: Does the amended PBLs-VM fit the data better than the original instrument?

Finally, we check whether background variables predict the outcomes of the amended instrument's dimensions. Besides the obvious variables of age, gender and education, we additionally assessed individual religiosity. In contemporary research a question regarding the extent to which people regard themselves as religious or not tells more about their state of belief than a question regarding religious denomination (Huber, 2003). While there is no reason to assume that these variables cause remarkable differences in the original dimensions of the PBLs-VM, an effect on the religious dimensions is plausible. There is good evidence that age, being female and being well educated are positively correlated with religiosity (Piedmont & Wilkins, 2015). In consequence, one may assume that the religious dimensions are more important to older and female tourists who hold a certificate of higher education than to their younger and male counterparts with a lower secondary educational certificate. Also, the score on the religious dimensions should rise with the importance of religion in the individual's worldview. Therefore, the third research question reads as follows:

RQ3: How do the variables age, gender, region, education and religiosity predict the outcome of the amended instrument's dimensions?

Method

Instruments

To assess the visit motivations of tourists exiting church buildings after visiting them, we amended the PBLs-VM. This instrument is comprehensive in terms of motives to visit museums, zoos, etc. (Phelan et al., 2018). It can be regarded as comprehensive in terms of cultural motives to visit church buildings, too. Religious motives are no part of this scale. Accordingly, we constructed sub-scales referring to each of three religious dimensions of visiting churches described previously: (a) for engaging in some religious practice; (b) for feeling the presence of God; and (c) for experiencing subjective-life-spirituality. The construction of these scales took place in two seminars at the universities of Bamberg and of Siegen by a process of five steps. First, in both seminars, the students reviewed the relevant state-of-art knowledge on visit motivation to cultural sites and on religiosity in modern times. Second, each student formulated possible motives to visit churches by themselves. Third, these motives were clustered independently in the seminars at Bamberg and Siegen. Fourth, in both seminars, the two results of clustering were compared independently. Both discussions brought about identical results: a solution of four clusters in which three clusters represented the three religious dimensions and the fourth cluster resembled the sub-scale *learning interest* in the original instrument. The fourth cluster has been omitted in the following process because it is already represented in the PBLs-VM. Finally, in each seminar for each cluster, the students could vote for the three items that represented the cluster's concept best. Again, the results of both seminars

were identical, not in the order of the items but in the ranking of the three best ones. Therefore we amended the PBLs-VM by the following items:

- to light a candle – to pray – to contemplate (representing the dimension of religious practice)
- to be near God – to reflect on God – to feel God’s presence (representing the dimension of God’s presence)
- to get into contact with my self – to find my inner balance – to find inner tranquillity (representing the dimension of subjective-life-spirituality)

The most controversial item was *to contemplate* as indicator of religious practice because it is not a typical part of traditional Christian practice. It, however, represents some form of religious practice and therefore has been accepted as appropriate indicator by both seminars.

Age has been assessed by an open question asking the participants to insert their age. Gender was represented by a dichotomous variable with the options *female* and *male*. To inform about their education the participants could tick in the boxes of *no certificate*, *a certificate of lower secondary education* and *a certificate of higher secondary education*. Individual religiosity, was measured by the prompt *How religious would you regard yourself?* and the participants could tick in one of the five options *very religious*, *fairly religious*, *somewhat religious*, *barely religious* and *not religious at all*.

Analysis

Due to the exploratory character of the first research question, this research question will be answered by conducting exploratory factor analysis using a principal-axis factor extraction to determine the factor structure. We applied varimax rotation for clarity in interpreting the single factors because we are interested in the basic dimensions of the factors. To determine the number of factors we refer to both the scree plot and the Kaiser-Guttman-Criterion. The second research question we answered by confirmatory factor analysis. We conducted this analysis for both the amended instrument and the original one to compare the fit indices. As indices, we will calculate CFI, RMSEA and SRME. Finally, the third research question was answered at the level of the empirical dimension’s latent means. We utilised linear regression analysis to estimate the effect of age, gender, education and religiosity on the various dimensions of visit motivation on touristic visits to church buildings.

Procedure

In June and July 2018 the students from Bamberg and Siegen asked tourists in nine major churches across Germany to fill in a questionnaire comprising the amended PBLs-VM. The locations comprised the cathedrals of Aachen, Bamberg, Cologne and Münster, St Mary at Altenberg, St Michael at Hamburg, St Mary at Kevelaer, St Lorenz at Nuremberg, and St Nicolai at Siegen. All these churches are spiritual centres as well as touristic hot-spots. To ensure that the participants did not enter the churches for some religious service the survey was not conducted within half an hour before or after such services.

The questionnaire was presented on tablets linked to internet. Only at Altenberg was a paper and pencil questionnaire necessary due to the bad connection to internet. By the end of July 2018, 771 participants had filled in the survey. The answers, however, are not spread equally across the nine locations of data collection. With 355 (46%) responses, the largest number of answers were from Bamberg. The second largest number of responses was collected at Cologne ($N = 115$; 20%), with 20 responses from St Nicolai at Siegen marking the end of the ranking. On the one hand, this distribution resembles the popularity of the various sites in the sample. On the other hand, this distribution of sites is biased by the students' opportunities to collect the data. Given the explorative character of this project, the unequal distribution of answers across sites does not flaw the procedures.

Participants

In terms of gender, 58% of the participants are female. The average age of the participants is 46 years ($SD = 18.03$), with ages ranging from 12 to 87 years. The sample is quite well educated. A higher secondary certificate is held by 375 (51%) participants. Another 344 (47%) participants hold a certificate of lower secondary education. Regarding denomination, 387 (50%) of the participants are Roman-Catholics, 219 (28%) are Protestants, and 62 (9%) are of no denomination. The rest did not fill in the relevant variable or ticked some other denomination. The self-report of individual religiosity indicated that 78 (10%) participants are very religious, 171 (22%) are fairly religious, 275 (36%) are somewhat religious, 108 (14%) are barely religious, and 121 (16%) are not religious at all.

Results

RQ 1 has been answered by exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The scree plot indicated a solution of three factors, the Kaiser-Guttman-Criterion a solution of six factors. The most intriguing result of the first EFA, however, is that all nine religious items form one factor. The participants do not distinguish between religious practice, the experience of God's presence, or subjective-life-spirituality when visiting a church building for touristic reasons. They acknowledge one religious dimension in their visit motivation that is made up of all the nine relevant items. Going into detail, it is the three items of God's presence (*to be near God – to reflect on God – to feel God's presence*) and they wish *to pray* that show the highest factor loadings. These four items characterise the religious dimension of tourists visiting a church building.

Because a typical dimension of the PBLs-VM comprises three items we have chosen the items *to feel God's presence*, *to reflect on God* and *to pray* as candidates to represent the religious dimension in the amended PBLs-VM. In consequence, the religious sub-scale entails three aspects of religiosity, a cognitive one (*to reflect on God*), an affective one (*to feel God's presence*) and a conative one (*to pray*). Conducting EFA on the revised amended PBLs-VM both scree plot and Kaiser-Guttman-Criterion indicate a six-factor solution. The result brings about a religious dimension and five out of the six original dimensions of PBLs-VM. Only the sub-scale *social enjoyment* is split up with one item loading on the factor *recuperation and relaxation* and the other on the factor *social learning*. We, therefore, omitted both items from the amended instrument.

Having revised the amended PBLs-VM as described, EFA reveals six solid factors (see table 1). The first factor represents the *religious dimension*, the other five factors the well-known sub-scales from the original PBLs-VM, namely *learning and pursuing interest*, *relaxation and recuperation*, *social learning*, *(establishing) social contacts*, and *popularity of site*. All items load highly on the relevant factor and do not show relevant loadings on the other factors. The KMO = .81 indicates a fair model fit. The structure of the revised instrument (RQ1) according to table 1 can be supported by confirmatory factor analysis. We, therefore, label the revised instrument PBLs-VM^R with the R indicating the amendment of the religious dimension.

Regarding the RQ2 which is about the model fit of the revised instrument we calculated the fit indices of CFI, RMSEA and SRME. The analysis is significant ($\chi^2(105) = 466.464$), but the relevant indices indicate a very moderate model fit: CFI = .93, RMSEA = .067, SRME = .052. These fit indices are not as good as the indices reported by Phelan et al. (2018, p. 36) in their study on visit motivation in museums, science centres and zoos. The fit indices of the original instrument in our sample, however, are very moderate, too: CFI = .92, RMSEA = .067, SRME = .053 with $\chi^2(89) = 397.679$. In this regard, in the context of church buildings the PBLs-VM^R performs as good as the PBLs-VM.

RQ3 has been answered via linear regression analysis, taking age, gender, education, and religiosity as independent variables and the six dimensions of visit motivation as dependent variable (see Table 2). According to these analyses it is only the religious dimension that is affected by religiosity and education at a noteworthy level ($R^2 \text{ adj.} = .38$; $F(2,679) = 220.46$; $p < .001$). Most of this impact comes from individual religiosity

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and standardised EFA factor loadings for six factors of visit motivation in church buildings ($N = 765$).

Item	M	SD	Factor loadings (EFA)					
			Rel	LI	RR	SL	SC	PS
<i>Religious dimension</i>								
to pray	2.77	1.50	.90	-.09	.16	-.09	.08	.01
to remember God	3.05	1.41	.90	.01	.20	-.12	.03	-.01
to feel God's presence	2.81	1.43	.88	-.04	.26	-.14	.06	.03
<i>Learning and interest dimension</i>								
to deepen my areas of interest	2.82	1.32	.03	.77	.08	.07	.04	.08
to broaden my horizons	3.20	1.33	-.01	.73	.14	.15	-.02	.03
to be better informed	3.05	1.37	-.02	.71	-.14	.09	.01	.13
to learn something new	3.16	1.33	-.16	.69	.04	.35	-.01	.24
<i>Relaxation and recreation dimension</i>								
to recuperate	2.68	1.31	.17	-.07	.80	-.04	.16	.04
to switch off for a while	3.15	1.26	.37	.03	.72	-.02	.07	-.11
to relax	2.79	1.27	.22	-.01	.69	-.24	.12	-.06
<i>Popularity of site dimension</i>								
because I want to say that I had been there	3.11	1.45	-.08	.09	.07	.84	.10	.15
because I heard this is a great church building	3.35	1.42	-.12	.28	-.08	.79	.01	.08
because this church is a tourist attraction	3.87	1.33	-.23	.37	-.22	.59	-.17	.06
<i>Social contact dimension</i>								
to meet new people	1.46	.89	.05	.03	.06	-.04	.89	.11
to connect with others	1.50	.88	.08	.00	.12	.07	.87	.12
<i>Social learning dimension</i>								
to support my child(ren)/ companion(s) with their learning	2.01	1.36	.02	.12	-.02	.14	.13	.88
because my family/friends learn things here they cannot learn elsewhere	2.16	1.33	.00	.24	.06	.11	.12	.83

Note: Rel: Religion; LI: learning and pursuing interest; RR: relaxation and recuperation; SL: social learning; SC: (establishing) social contacts; PS: popularity of site; all items on a 5-point Likert scale (1: not important; 5: very important).

Table 2. Linear regression of centrality of religion and tendency of disaffiliation on disaffiliation motives.

	Religion		Learning		Relaxation		Social learning		Social contacts		Popularity	
	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p
Age	–	–	.18	.001	–.12	.01	–.11	.01	–.15	.001	–.11	.01
Gender	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–.08	.05
Education	–.10	.01	–	–	–.07	.05	.10	.01	–.18	.001	–	–
Religiosity	–.61	.001	–	–	–.21	.001	–	–	–	–	.13	.001
R^2 adj	.38		.03		.06		.02		.04		.03	
ANOVA	$F(2.679)$ = 220.46 $p < .001$		$F(1.698)$ = 22.30 $p < .001$		$F(3.696)$ = 15.09 $p < .001$		$F(2.697)$ = 9.72 $p < .001$		$F(2.697)$ = 15.59 $p < .001$		$F(3.696)$ = 8.67 $p < .001$	

Note: Gender = being male; education = holding a certificate of higher secondary education; religiosity = being not religious at all.

($\beta = -.61$, $p < .001$), indicating that the more religious the tourists regard themselves the more important is the religious dimension when visiting a church building. Education is also significant in this regard ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .01$). Tourists with a moderate educational level tend to regard the religious dimension slightly more important than their counterparts with higher secondary education. The other five dimensions of tourist motivation show significant effects of the independent variables, the explained variance, however, is too small to regard these effects as noteworthy.

Discussion

The goal of this project is to develop an instrument to assess the visit motivation of tourists calling at church buildings within a comprehensive theoretical framework. By adapting the PBLs-VM this instrument is supported by a solid strand of theoretical reflection on visit motivation at cultural sites (Phelan et al., 2018). Amending the PBLs-VM by a religious dimension, the new instrument respects the particular character of churches as touristic sites.

The test of the PBLs-VM^R indicates that typical tourists associate church buildings with traditional religion. First, the three different factors of religiosity – religious practice, God's presence, subjective-life-spirituality – could not be recovered by factor analysis. Instead, all relevant items load on one single factor. Second, the items with the highest loading on this factor are those addressing the presence of God and the traditional religious practice of praying. They define the meaning of the relevant factor. Third, the items representing subjective-life-spirituality do not show high loadings on this factor. Therefore, they do not contribute to its meaning. All in all, the religious impact of church buildings on tourists is framed by traditional religious meaning and practice. In theoretical perspective, this finding contributes to a better understanding of previous research on visits to church buildings. This research showed that the aura and atmosphere of church buildings are of some importance to the visitors (Francis et al., 2012; Gutic et al., 2010). Also studies on the effect of scholastic field trips to the local church indicate that the building's atmosphere has an impact on the students (Kindermann & Riegel, 2016). This impact, however, is not interpreted by the visitors according to some subjective-life-spirituality. Instead, it seems to represent the holy character of the location and triggers typical meanings of

Christian tradition. In a practical perspective this finding may help cathedral officers to refine their touristic programme: it may be better to present the local church as a place of Christian heritage, rather than a space of individual wellbeing.

Moreover, the fact that the PBLS-VM^R works well among visitors to church buildings supports the theoretical assumption that such sites are cultural artefacts, too, if they are frequented on touristic tours. Besides the religious dimension, the PBLS-VM^R shows the identical internal structure to that reflected by the original PBLS-VM, except for one factor. In consequence, the basic structure of visitor motivation at churches is very much the same as that at pure cultural sites, like museums, zoos or science centres. That finding qualifies church buildings as cultural sites. In rural areas where church buildings may be one of the few sites being worth a visit, this insight might be of particular interest. From an economic perspective, church buildings offer multiple motivators to potential visitors, ranging from religious ones to cultural ones and to pedagogical ones. It is up to the local tourist offices and tour guides how to communicate which of these motivators may best attract tourists. From a theological perspective, the local religious community may use the cultural dimension of its church building to attract visitors – and to inform them about the religious dimension of this location during the visit. Concerning the secular context of modern society, church buildings are one of the few cultural artefacts to express explicitly the message of Christ. A touristic tour around a church building may contribute to informal learning about religion.

In terms of psychometrics, the model fit of the amended instrument is rather moderate. However, the dimensional structure of the PBLS-VM^R is supported by CFA and the model fit of the original instrument on our sample is not better. Then, the results of regression analyses are very plausible. It is well in line with previous studies that the more religious the visitors are the more important is the site's religious dimension (Rebenstorf & Körs, 2018; Williams et al., 2007). At the same time, that individual religiosity does not have an effect on the other dimensions of visitor motivation is also plausible, because these dimensions are indifferent in terms of religiosity. In consequence, the regression analyses support the external validity of the amended instrument. All these results indicate that it could be worth going on with the PBLS-VM^R. Given the exploratory character of this project the results are acceptable.

However, one desideratum of this project is to look for further support for (or objections against) the validity of the PBLS-VM^R. For example, a further study could improve the sampling strategy of the locations for gathering data. According to Shackley (2006, p. 134), one may distinguish between churches of international relevance attracting many people from abroad, of medium-sized relevance attracting nationals from all over the place, of urban relevance attracting predominantly people from the local area, and of parish churches being visited more or less only by those who belong to the relevant religious community. In terms of this concept, our sample comprised cathedrals of international relevance (Cologne, Bamberg), of national relevance (Nuremberg) and of urban relevance (the rest of the sample). Only Altenberg is located in a rural area. In consequence, the majority of our data has been collected on sites of international relevance. It would be interesting to test the PBLS-VM^R on a more balanced sample in Shackley's categories. Also, a better balance in denominational background of the church buildings could be a desideratum for further studies. In our sample, only St Lorenz, Nuremberg, is a Protestant church (until the Reformation, however, it was a Catholic one, which

can be seen still today in its interior). All other sites are Roman Catholic ones. Perhaps denominational backgrounds of church buildings cause differences in the structure of visit motivation, too. The recent study of Rebenstorf and Körs (2018) does not show such differences, but it is not exhaustive in this regard. The British studies analyse only Anglican cathedrals. A study with an inter-denominational sample of church buildings in which to assess the visitor motivation is still missing. There are also no explicit studies on visit motivations of members of non-Christian religions. In consequence, there is still some research to be done on the PBLs-VM^R.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Ulrich Riegel is professor of religious education at the Seminar of Catholic Theology at Siegen University.

Konstantin Lindner is professor of religious education at the Faculty of Humanities at Bamberg University.

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