

15.2 Approach to religion in tourism conflict management on the case of Morocco

Tourism development perspectives often lead to the emergence of conflicts and, it is fairly common that the final results are not satisfactory to anyone. Although the collaborative approach seems to be a good strategy to manage those conflicts.

The tourism industry or sector is an important source of economic activity worldwide. The tourism industry plays a major role in providing huge employment opportunities directly. And at the same time, it also provides other employment avenues indirectly by supporting allied sectors or industry. The tourism industry continues to be one of the rapidly growing as well as one of the largest industrial sectors worldwide [665]. The growth rate in tourism sector has been showing consistent increase annually and is expected to follow the same pattern in the future. The detailed report presented by UNWTO has revealed that tourism has turned out to be one of the «key drivers for socioeconomic progress» [666]. The contribution that tourism activity makes to State economies and to the global economy as a whole is immense. The safety and security of tourists is important for any tourist industry because incidents of crime, disasters or terrorism on a religious basis negatively impacts tourist destinations. Unlike other factors, terrorism or political unrest on a religious basis can have major and consistent impact on tourism. Tourism is not just important for economic development but can serve as a tool for peace building.

Conflict management is the set of techniques required to identify and resolve conflict. Since conflict is a normal part of any environment, conflict management's goal is to detect and minimize the negative effects of conflict rather than eliminating it completely. Understanding the basis of the conflict is the way to minimize the consequences of the conflict. In tourism conflict management could to be thinking about religion as: proposed are religion as community, religion as a set of teachings, religion as spirituality, religion as practice and religion as discourse []. Several of these ways of thinking about religion may be relevant in any one type of tourism.

Religion as community emphasizes the collective, community-forming aspects of religion. In times of conflict, religion may be an important resource for preserving or strengthening social cohesion, both within and across groups, and thus for increasing community resilience. Conversely, the same dynamic of strengthening social bonds often leads to the emergence of boundaries between groups. Where the identities of groups in conflict have a religious component, conflict lines may be drawn along religious identity lines. Religion can become an identity-marker, serving to designate who is «friend» and who is «foe».

Religion as a set of teachings characterizes religion as a set of inherited teachings on how things are and how they ought to be. Such teachings can be something around which a society unites. However, where different groups in society subscribe to different ideas and teachings, or where a particular group follows teachings that contradict the status quo in society, it can lead to conflict. It is not uncommon for actors in conflict to justify their actions with reference to religious beliefs and doctrine. This is true both for actions that may escalate conflict and those seeking to promote peace.

Religion as spirituality focuses on personal experiences of the ultimate. Such spiritual experience may act as a motivator for social and political action, whether conflict-inducing or peace-promoting. Shared experiences of spirituality may also contribute to strengthening bonds between individuals and communities.

Religion as practice sees religion as something lived in everyday life, in food, dress, etc. and in a series of coded practices of enactment (customs, rituals, ceremonies). Society may be interpreted as a community of communication and ritual. Significant and perilous phases of life such as birth, marriage, or death are given a stabilizing form through rites of passage. Conflicts, which often represent significant and perilous phases in the lives of individuals and of communities, may be regulated through rites of passage.

Religion as discourse can be understood simply as the words and language used to communicate. A deeper understanding of the term views discourse as a manifestation of a whole way of thinking about, and acting in, the world. In conflict, the use of religious language and rhetoric is sometimes attributed to public actors

instrumentalizing religion in order to broaden the appeal of their message. However, there are also many cases where the use of religious discourse is a genuine manifestation of a particular worldview. In these cases, if tourists are using different discourses, this may complicate communication and understanding between them and special efforts need to be made to find ways to address these difficulties.

These five ways of thinking about religion can be combined with the concept of «dividers» (sources of tension) and «connectors» (capacities for peace) to generate a series of questions useful for exploring religion's role in conflict and for deepening an analysis of conflict in table 1.

Table 1.

Question method for analyzing religion's role in conflict

Approach to religion	Dividers	Connectors
1	2	3
Religion as community	Are communities divided along religious identity lines? What are religious leaders and institutions doing that fuels tensions and conflict?	Is there a shared religious identity which connects people across conflict lines? What are religious leaders and institutions doing that builds connections between people and reduces tensions?
Religion as a set of teachings	How are religious teachings being used to justify and/or motivate conflict-fueling behavior? How are references to different sets of teachings, or different interpretations of a set of teachings, contributing to disagreements?	How are religious teachings being used to justify and/or motivate peace-promoting behavior? How are religious teachings being used to identify common ground?
Religion as spirituality	What divisive behavior is explained by actors as motivated by their spiritual experience? How are shared spiritual experiences being used to strengthen exclusive group identities?	What peace-promoting behavior do actors explain as motivated by spiritual experience? How are shared spiritual experiences being used to create connections between people?
Religion as practice	What practices are sources of contention and division?	What practices help to create connections between people?
Religion as discourse	Which discourses and narratives are clashing? What are the differing worldviews behind opposing discourses? Are problems of understanding contributing to divisions?	Which groups in society «speak the same language» and have similar worldviews? What historical or contemporary examples are there of disagreements being overcome despite groups having different discourses?

Approach to religion in tourism conflict management considers the example of Morocco. The conflict «Salafi movements or methodologies are based on a return to the origins of Islam as it was lived and practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions and the two generations of Muslims who came after him».

The discourse of the «global war on terror» contributed in Morocco to a conflation between Salafism and violent Islamism. This conflation was in large part due to ignorance and misunderstandings about the nature of Salafi groups. They were increasingly regarded with suspicion. While there was a small minority of violent groups who espoused Salafi ideology, many Salafis were opposed to violence against the Moroccan state or in Moroccan territory. On 16 May 2003 a series of bomb attacks in Casablanca killed thirty-three civilians and twelve suicide bombers. The bombing was attributed to a violent Salafi group. In the ensuing crackdown, the Moroccan government imprisoned thousands of individuals suspected of links to Salafi groups, most of who contested that they had been engaged in any violent activities and some who contested that they were Salafis. Anti-terrorism laws were quickly introduced and in the following ten years over 3000 people were incarcerated for suspected links to terrorism. Some were tried and received sentences ranging from one month to capital punishment. Some detainees completed their sentences and were released, or were granted a royal pardon, but hundreds of people labeled as Salafis remain imprisoned and awaiting trial.

In 2009 an initiative known as Ansifuna, «be fair with us», was launched by a group of Salafi prisoners in Fez prison. Believing that misunderstandings about the nature of their religion, and a perception that it posed a threat to the state, was part of the reason for their imprisonment, the group set out to try and better communicate their Salafi philosophy and ideology, emphasizing that it did not endorse violence against the Moroccan state or society. While believing their imprisonment to be unjust, they also felt they had a responsibility to clarify their positions and dispel misunderstanding. They began an informal dialogue amongst Salafi prisoners. As it progressed, the dialogue became more formal, leading to the drafting of a consensus document laying out their thinking, including the rejection of violence and the practice of takfir

(declaring people infidels). This document was circulated in several detention centers and also publicized in the media. As the majority of detainees did not accept what they were accused of, the document was not about repentance or revising their positions, it was about demonstrating how they had been misunderstood and making an appeal for fair treatment. The initiative was started by a group of Salafists led by Abdelwaheb Rafiki, better known as «Abu Hafs», a wellrespected figure in Moroccan Salafi circles for his preaching, community engagement and Salafi pedigree (his father, also a Salafi, had served as a nurse to the mujahideen in Afghanistan and both he and his father had spent time in prison). The initiative drew its credibility from Abu Hafs reputation but also from its basis in the Salafi tradition of reasoning and argumentation from original Islamic texts. The initiative was controversial amongst the prisoners and Abu Hafs' group encountered resistance, and even threats, from those opposed to it. These included violent Salafis who feared being isolated if the majority of Salafi prisoners signed up to a document promoting non-violence, and those who believed that any attempts at communication or dialogue with the authorities was unacceptable as they had all been falsely imprisoned. Ultimately, however, as well as a core group of 30 to 40 in Fez prison, it was estimated that the large majority of Salafi detainees in prisons across Morocco did subscribe to the principles outlined in this consensus document or similar subsequent documents drafted and circulated in other prisons [668].

Since 2009 some Salafi detainees, including some of the leaders of the initiative have been released, although not directly as a result of the initiative. Following their release they went on to work with a group of Moroccan human rights and civil society organizations with the aim of developing a roadmap for comprehensively resolving the situation of the remaining detainees held under anti-terrorism legislation. Reflecting on the limitations of the 2009 experience, its initiators have been able to identify a number of challenges of conducting intra Salafi dialogue within prison. Firstly, there is great physical risk for the dialogue initiators, particularly from violent Salafi actors, opposed to the initiative. Secondly, the credibility of dialogue is compromised by the fact that people are prisoners. They are constrained in what they can say and their statements may be motivated by a desire to facilitate their release. In Islam, and the Salafi

methodology in particular, great value is placed on dialogue and argumentation without constraints. For this reason, the third challenge was that they, as initiators of dialogue, were insiders who were constrained both by being in prison and by being subject to the pressures of having to live within the Moroccan state. They concluded an internal dialogue may be best supported by Ulemmas and respected Salafi leaders coming from abroad who would be perceived as freer and more credible [667].

The negative public image of Salafis was largely due to the geopolitical climate causing Salafi groups to be associated with terrorism but was also reinforced by their general tendency of self-isolation from political life, which hampered their ability to present an alternative image of themselves. Conflict settlement was premised on the idea that a common position amongst Salafi prisoners could be reached through discussions based on common religious reference points, in table 2.

Table 2.

Approached of religion in Salafi Conflict

Approach to religion	Thinking about religion
1	2
Religion as community	The label of «Salafi» was associated to jihadism and used by the Moroccan authorities to single out a group of people and detain them for suspected links to terrorism. Religion in this case served as an identity-marker, marking out who the authorities considered to be a potential threat to the state. This led the Salafi detainees to launch an attempt to speak with one voice as a community to counter what was being said about them
Religion as a set of teachings	The initiative was primarily about the Salafi prisoners correcting misperceptions of their religion by offering a clear statement of their belief system. Reaching such a consensus statement will have required theological discussions about Islamic texts and principles and how they should be interpreted and applied to the specific context. The joint statement of the detainees aimed to clarify what implications Salafi teachings have for social and political questions. Above all, they wanted to make clear their rejection of violence and the indiscriminate anathemization of those who have different faiths

Now the government of Morocco aims to make tourism the country's number one industry. Gulf countries are contributing substantially to the financing of projects. A sovereign fund for tourism was created in 2011 between Morocco, the United Arab

Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait. Wessal Capital, equally owned by its stakeholders, will channel investments amounting to some \$3 billion in Moroccan tourism [669].

Morocco's other ambition is to rank among the world's top 20 destinations and establish itself as a leading player in sustainable safe development. A diversified offering is encouraged: spas, business, desert, mountain, culture, sustainable development. Every city has its own appeal. Marrakech offers tourism and animation, Casablanca is a business and financial city. Rabat is a thriving capital. Tangier is Morocco's gateway to Europe. The aim is essentially to speed up the execution of the planned spa projects, this will lead to job creation, new income generation and a sustained economic stimulus.

The main thing is to avoid being associated with the troubles in the Maghreb region by stressing the country's economic and political stability. Morocco needs to be set apart from the countries affected by the Arab Spring, which are suffering from a slump in tourist arrivals (particularly Egypt and Tunisia). Moreover, Morocco is positioning itself as a premium destination, a far cry from mass tourism. The average spending per tourist is a clear illustration of this: \$800 per stay in Morocco on average, which compares with \$400 for Tunisia and Egypt. Morocco is already a favourite destination among Europeans. Travellers from France, Spain, Italy and Germany never seem to tire of its ever-changing charms, and keep coming back year after year. Marrakech offers a trendy and fun weekend break, Essaouira attracts sport lovers keen on kite surf and board sailing, while history and culture enthusiasts can indulge their passion virtually anywhere they go. In addition to the European countries regarded as its traditional markets, Morocco is focusing on newly emerging ones, which are becoming increasingly important. A case in point is tourism from the Middle East, with a 20% rise in arrivals 2019 year, Scandinavian countries and Poland also show promise [669].

The Morocco Tourism and Hotel Industry is segmented on domestic, international and other market segments, in table 3.

Table 3.

Segmentation of Morocco Tourism and Hotel Industry

A sign of segmentation	Segment
1	2
By Origin	Domestic International
By Destination	Marrakesh Agadir and Taghazout Casablanca Rabat Tangier Other Destinations
By Type	Accommodation Services Travel Services
Major Players in Hotel Industry	Four Seasons Resort Marrakech Accor Gestion Maroc Hilton Garden Inn Tanger City Center Radisson Blu Hotel, Marrakech Carre Eden Hotel Sofitel Marrakech Lounge and Spa

According to the 2019 Travel Risk Map, in terms of travel safety, Morocco is as safe as most European countries, such as the France, and Germany, and thereby has a low-risk level [671]. By maintaining this level over the last years, it is the only country to have a low-risk level in North Africa, Tunisia are at a medium risk level, while Algeria and Egypt has a high-risk level in Fig.1.

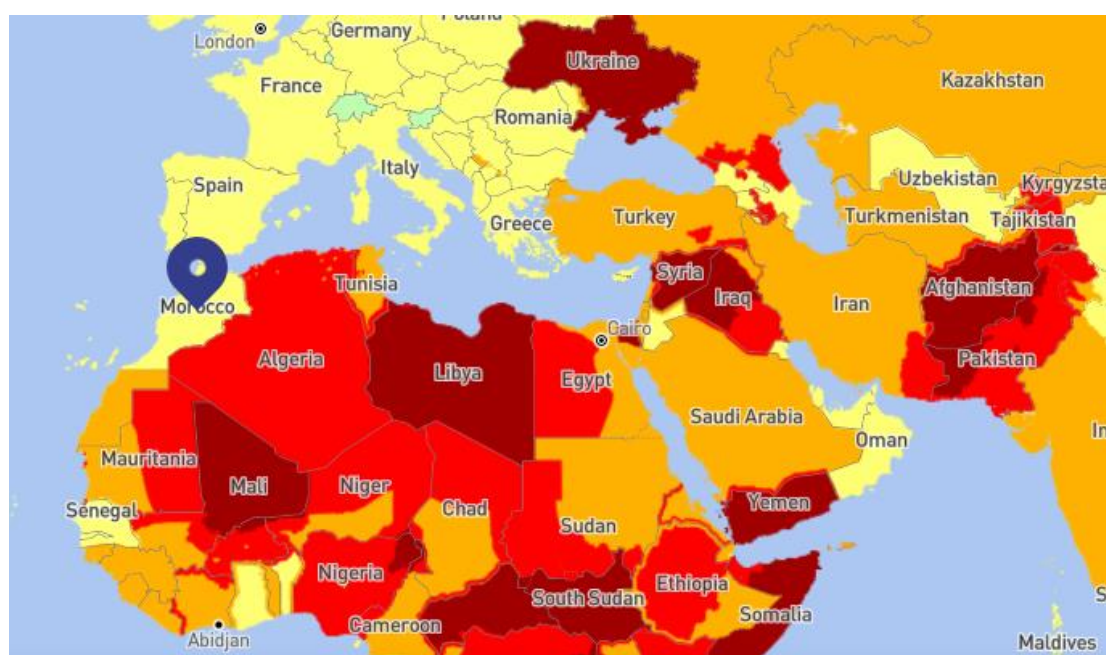


Figure 1. The security risk level of Morocco.

Agadir and Marrakech are the most popular destinations for hotel stays. The Covid-19 crisis, with a full lockdown and a ban on all international travel since March, has reduced the income of many workers however, restricting their budget for holidays. Most hotels in Morocco are also more tailored to the needs of foreign tourists. Domestic tourism represents 30% of hotel arrivals, and one million Moroccans go abroad every year. In Morocco, the tourist industry has been badly hit by the pandemic. Yet the investment by Hilton hotels' top luxury brand in building of «Conrad Hotels & Resorts» again shows the long-term appeal of Morocco as a top tourist destination [672].

With an unspoiled coastline, vast swathes of desert, and a unique cultural heritage, Morocco's three southern provinces have the right ingredients to support a sustainable tourism industry. Although the region lags behind others in terms of site development and accommodation, private and public initiatives are helping to open up new opportunities for niche products and increase visitor traffic. Given the range of attractions and low development levels, there are significant opportunities for growth in the tourism sector in the country. Tourism accounted for very less percentage in southern provinces, which is partly due to the limited air links with the more heavily populated north, where the primary international airports are located, as well as underdevelopment of accommodation and niche services. The tourism sector has not achieved its full potential due to several factors, such as poor communication at the regional and national levels on the region's potential, the low bed capacity, animation, and entertainment services. This dynamic is changing, however, thanks to the national tourism development strategy, «Plan Azur 2020», which is facilitating the build-out of tourism capacity in the southern provinces. Additional flights have begun linking the three major cities to Casablanca and the Canary Islands; Dakhla, for instance, has 10 weekly flights to Agadir and Casablanca combined [670]. As a result, a combination of large-scale investments and smaller family-owned hospitality businesses has been increasing local supply and raising the region's profile with local and foreign visitors alike.

Religion is a tricky object in tourism conflict management. It is often viewed as either irrelevant, and is ignored, or as too complex, neither approach is satisfactory. To ignore it is to risk missing important dimensions of the conflict. To treat it as a specialist domain is to miss its crosscutting nature. As the case of Morocco, religion may be relevant in conflict in multiple ways. Rather than working on it as a separate piece, religion should be approached holistically, with its role in conflict being analyzed and factored into the design of any conflict management initiative whenever relevant for tourism development.