*What Factors distinguish the pilgrim from the tourist. Conversely to what extent can the pilgrim be considered a tourist? Compare “the journey” and “the attractions” available to both the pilgrim and the tourist.*

**Introduction**

A common question which many ask about this subject is What is the difference between a tourist and a pilgrim? Well first of all we need to point out that both have some things in common, however they differ also in many ways. In this essay I will be going more in detail about this notion of the tourist and the pilgrim. I will be covering mainly their journeys, their expectations, transport modes, attitudes towards their journey.

“When is a traveller a pilgrim and when is he or she a tourist? Can one person be both, or do pilgrimage and tourism exclude each other?“

The analysis of these questions in our tourism versus pilgrim context is the primary idea of this essay. As holidays approach many will start preparing to travel to a foreign country. Included excursions may contain a visit to a particular church or some ancient ruins. Now will that person be a tourist or a pilgrim? The person is still visiting a sacred place, but what will his aim or expectation be?

**The General Difference Between A Tourist And A Pilgrim**

With the rate of mass tourism these terms have been confused between one another however when one explains them in detail the differences become clearer. This confusion is due to the fact that nowadays the way a pilgrimage is organised has changed considerably.

Let us now consider the main point that in my opinion makes a pilgrim different from a tourist. The main factor which one can use, to compare the tourist and the pilgrim is the aim of their journey. The pilgrim travels to a particular “sacred place” so as to embark in a spiritual and emotional experience. This “sacred place” can be a church, a location which marks a
specific event in a religion’s history (Lourdes in France), or an important religious location such as Jerusalem for the Christians, and Mecca for the Muslims. On the other hand a tourist’s main aim for travel is mainly to have fun (leisure & recreation). Now the pilgrim is not considered to be a pilgrim, just because he visits such places. This is because a tourist can also visit these so-called “sacred places”, but his experience on location is different. The tourist is interested mainly in the attraction itself as a structure and not in the actual experience and the history of that place. An interesting fact is that a pilgrim in general can be considered as a tourist as he is also travelling to a place temporarily, away from his/her permanent place of residence or work. This is according to the general definition of a “tourist”. We need to also look at what motivates a tourist or a pilgrim to travel to a destination. I think that what is different between a tourist and a pilgrim is their expectations. This is just a general comparison between the two parties. I will be giving more specific examples as to differ the pilgrim from the tourist.

The Local’s view.

For some people, mainly the general public for them a pilgrim is also a tourist as he/she is a person from a foreign country. For those who earn a living from the tourism industry in a particular area, it does not make a difference, as they are only interested in the income they can earn from a possible sale of a product or service. For example if a pilgrim goes to a particular pilgrimage site where candles are sold, the seller will try to sell these things both to the tourist and the pilgrim. Let us consider that example the residents of a particular area, do not like to have tourists around. They may exhibit certain reactions such as speaking in a rough way to tourists etc.. If they encounter a pilgrim, they will do the same thing, unless they understand the purpose of his visit to that area. Negative reactions are targeted to all foreign visitors and not particularly only to pilgrims or tourists. Generally the elderly are loyal to their culture and area and do not want any foreign people contaminating their local culture.
The Different Attitudes.

The Tourist

As I already pointed out the tourist and the pilgrim both have different aims, so they will also have different attitudes towards their stay. Upon arrival at a destination the tourist who as already mentioned is there purposely for leisure will immediately look and get attracted by restaurants, hotels, night clubs and other so called “western amenities”. These are common attitudes of the average tourist. However there are various types of tourists and this attitude is not applicable to all types. For example if we consider the tourist which falls under the explorer type, we see that he/she is more interested in adventure areas and places which one can explore, rather than fancy restaurants and shopping malls. The Mass tourist for example is on a sort of “pay for fun basis”. This type will usually have a pre booked all inclusive package which comprises transportation, accommodation, excursions and insurance (which is usually also offered by the travel agent as part of the package). One problem with such tourists is that they go to a destination enclosed in a bubble, this means that they are not ready to adapt to the local culture and mix with the locals. This type of tourist will surely not be considered a pilgrim. Their expectations are different from that of a pilgrim. There can be obviously other variations from the norm, Example certain mass tourists may still exhibit behaviours generally associated with the explorer type of tourist. Example when I travel with my family we go with a group because it is cheaper but then we wonder alone. Obviously during excursions we reunite again with the group.

The Pilgrim

The pilgrim has a different attitude towards his trip. However pilgrims may vary also. The pilgrim can be staying just for the day so upon arrival he/she immediately heads to the purpose of his/her travel. Accommodation can also be pre booked however pilgrims staying for a short period can also opt to use conventional methods
such as camping. Sometimes the camping site can be just a few metres away from the “sacred place”. We must note also the type of pilgrim in terms of his beliefs. A Muslim pilgrim surely will behave differently than a Christian pilgrim both in terms of rituals and also in their approach to a sacred place or monument. What is sacred for a Muslim may mean nothing for a Christian. The pilgrim will look at the spiritual beauty of a sacred place rather than aesthetic beauty. Obviously the architecture or beauty of that place will still be aesthetically valuable for the pilgrim, but it will not be the primary force of attraction. Places with certain spiritual value or places of pray will have a pull effect to the pilgrim (mainly to the human soul). It is the way that the pilgrim responds to these pull factors that makes a person a pilgrim.

**Expectancy**

The holiday season (Christmas) is approaching and some of the Maltese like other people prefer to go on a holiday abroad. Usually during the Christmas holidays we see a slight increase in the number of people travelling. Surely these people will visit churches, or maybe sacred ruins. Now the difference comes in what one expects when visiting that place. Will the visitor go to that place just to pass the time or be part of the excursion group? If the answer to this question is yes than that person can surely be defined as a tourist. The other question is will that person visit that place to increase his knowledge and learn more from that place and will he treat these ruins, churches or other monuments as valuable structures? If the answer to this question is yes than that person can be said to be a pilgrim. One can easily transform his holiday into part-pilgrimage if he/she changes the attitude on how to treat his journey.

**The attractions**

The attractions available to the tourist are identical to those available to the pilgrims. These can be various, mainly varying in their purpose. Their purpose could be for entertainment, leisure, sports, cuisine, historical, religious etc.. The tourist will concentrate more on the leisure and entertainment attractions while the pilgrim will concentrate more on the historical and religious attractions available. However this is usually
associated with the pilgrim of the past, and it forms part of the antiquated idea that many have of a pilgrim. The attractions and facilities available are identical to both parties. Both are surrounded by hotels, beaches, restaurants, pubs and all other attractive places in that area. As described in previous paragraphs the attractions which a pilgrim may put in the top of his list could be churches, sacred ruins etc. However this does not mean that the much attractive pubs are not frequented by pilgrims. It still depends on the lifestyle of that person. Leisure excursions are available also both to the tourist and the pilgrim. So we come to the conclusion that it is not a question of availability of attractions but it is related to what priority certain attractions get by a visitor. This statement however is not conclusive due to the fact that such factors are quite variable.

**Motivations**

Nowadays the primary source of motivation both for the tourist and the pilgrim, but especially for the tourist is the media. This includes all sources, from brochures to shiny television adverts, they all constitute to the fact that people are motivated to travel. In a way this is a positive aspect as people get an opportunity to travel and hopefully bring back good experiences from their holiday. Tourists may also be motivated to travel for other ways also. These include family visits, international fairs, shopping (such as London January sales), and many other reasons. The pilgrim on the other hand is motivated mainly by his quest to visit a place, which to him is sacred. Now the interesting fact is that those pilgrims that travel with these pilgrimage groups are not entirely motivated to travel to visit that sacred place. The point is that the main motivation for that journey was the influence by the media and the attractive package. If a person really wanted to visit that sacred place he could have easily gone alone or with a friend.

**The Journey**

When one travels to another place ideally everything should be planned beforehand. The tourists usually has everything planned before hand. The mass tourist will have an all inclusive package which includes accommodation,
excursion, transfers, flights, insurance well everything. This is all handled by the agent, the tourist just needs to go to the agent and book. The length of stay can vary also from a few days to 2 weeks. The pilgrim will surely have pre booked flights or ferry tickets, but there are some who just stop here. These could be pilgrims travelling just for the day. There are pilgrims also that do not mind setting example a camp near their pilgrimage spot. This is the cheapest accommodation that one can find at it will surely make a person go more deeply into his spiritual experience of his pilgrimage. There are also pilgrims that may stay for months or weeks. These are usually pilgrims doing research, such as anthropologists studying the society of a particular pilgrimage area. This could also be study on the pilgrimage of that area. With regards to modes of transportation there is no difference. Both travel by plane or ship. A pilgrim may prefer walking however than catching a taxi to travel within the area.

**My views and conclusions**

Nowadays it is quite difficult to have a general difference between a tourist and a pilgrim. This is because both sort of have merged into one another. We are now seeing the phenomena of mass tourism applied also to pilgrimages. Various groups are organised example from Malta to Lourdes, the main highlight of the journey being the pilgrimage place and usually with little attention to extras. This will also include an all inclusive package.

Another question which pops up is, to what extent can a pilgrim be considered a tourist? Well a pilgrim can become a tourist instantly during his travel experience. If during his pilgrimage the amount of leisure exceeds that of pilgrimage than we can say that we have a tourist. This is because a tourist is someone who travels for the purpose of recreation (leisure). I think that these is an issue which will continue to develop and maybe become clearer in the future. I think that pilgrimage is blending in with the rest of the tourism industry and I think that is a good idea to have this mixture. I would like to conclude with this statement
“The tourist and the pilgrim are different because they want to be different. A tourist can be a pilgrim as much as a pilgrim can be a tourist or both”.

Summary of points:

- The tourist and the pilgrim are different because they have a different attitude towards their travel experiences.

- The tourist and the pilgrim have different aims and expectations

- Locals may feel that foreigners are contaminating their local culture and may react negatively.

- The attractions available are the same for both. The difference is the priority that one gives to certain attractions.

- A pilgrim is different from a tourist because the amount of time allocated for leisure is less than that allocated for his pilgrimage.

- Nowadays both are affected and influenced by the media.

- Pilgrimages are also being organised in groups.

- Pilgrimage groups travel within the same parameters of mass tourist groups