

# Chapter 8

## The Quest for Religious Tourism Among Gen Alpha: Looking Ahead for the Journey of Faith Walked by Gen Z

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### ABSTRACT

*Generation Alpha is drawn to religious teachings, spiritual podcasts, value-based content, and sacred landscapes. They hunt for connections from their roots and reinforce ancient history and culture through new societies. In India, post-pandemic there is a rise in religious tourism in the quest for faith in personal prayers and divine God. Therefore, it is extremely important to explore the trajectory of the “Journey of Faith” from one generation to the next. The chapter attempts to explore the “quest” of motives behind the increasing interest in religious tourism among Generation Z and Alpha. Furthermore, the chapter aimed to analyze the positioning of Gen Alpha in religious tourism compared to past Gen Z conceptually. The findings shed light on the changing perceptions of Gen Alpha in the multiverse world. Moreover, the study also highlighted the future challenges that impact the sustainability of religious tourism.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

India is the birthplace of the faith-based tourism market, which revolves around regions with unique history, ethos, faith, and attractions. In India, spiritual travelers are undertaken by a family, a group of families, or individuals who desire to expand their spiritual consciousness and connect with their higher self. It covers various religious practices like Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and other native faiths that have shaped India’s rich heritage for centuries. India can precisely be named the ‘Land of Faith.’ Future Market Insights (FMI), a market researcher anticipated an average annual growth of

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16% in the faith-based tourism market in India from \$1 billion in 2023 to \$4.6 billion by 2033. Tourism experts interchangeably use the terms 'religious,' 'spiritual,' and 'pilgrimage'. (Galzacorta et al., 2016). "Pilgrimage is a journey made by a pilgrim, who travels from place to place, usually journeying a long distance and to a sacred place as an act of devotion"(Little et al., 1933). "a traveler is someone who moves between different geographic locations for any purpose and any duration"(World Tourism Organization, 2021;p.3). Religious Tourism refers to "travel with the core motive of experiencing religious forms, or the products they induce" (FICCI, 2012; p.2). Based on the product, location, and passion, religious tourism in India has the following major categories namely; pilgrimages, missionary travel, faith-based camps and cursing, retreats, monastery visits, religious tourist attractions, and leisure vacations (FICCI, 2012). A report published under the Business Line (Verma, 2024) stated that post-COVID-19, religious curiosity among Indians become stronger. The religious tourism witnessed 1439 million tourists and earned 1.34 lakh crore in 2022. According to Ministry of Tourism statistics, it is anticipated to generate a profit of 59 billion by 2028, employing 140 million jobs by 2030. In addition, the report also indicates a 14% rise in donations in the year 2021-22. According to a report by Booking.com cited in Forbes India, 70 percent of Indian travelers stated that they were seeking spiritual and mindfulness getaways to recentre the mind (Jain, 2024). The study aims to explore the 'quest' of motives in increasing religious tourism trends among Generation Z and Alpha. The chapter inspects the traveling behaviour of Generation Z and Alpha towards religious tourism. Lastly, the chapter also investigates the future challenges in sustaining religious tourism.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study is based on secondary or desk research based on various sources including websites, surveys, reports, newspapers, journals, books, magazines, and online forums. The Google Scholar database is used to review published research. The following keyword strings are used: ("faith-based" OR "religious tourism" OR "spiritual tourism") AND ("Generation Z" or Gen Z") or ("Generation Alpha" or "Gen Alpha"). The chapter is exploratory and descriptive. To answer the research questions, the chapter focuses on the socio-cognitive perspective on religious tourism under discussion

- (i) What is the role of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media, government schemes & initiatives in determining religious tourism?
- (ii) What are the Generation Z and Alpha traveling trends toward religious tourism?

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1 Religious Tourism**

Technically, being spiritual and religious both are different. (Berghuijs et al., 2013; Hollins, 2005; Marler & Hadaway, 2002). Spiritual tourism stances for self-discovery and soul healing (Norman, 2012). (Smith & Kelly, 2006) use the term "holistic tourism" as an umbrella term for both religious and spiritual tourism. The authors considered spiritual tourism as the 'spiritual quest' of the individual (p. 17), which may or may not be affiliation to any religious ground for example, enjoying visits, personal

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