


Chapter 2

Sustainable Spatial Design in Religious Tourism:


Influences on Tourist Behaviour, Satisfaction, and Environmental Integrity

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the complex interplay between sustainable spatial design, eco-friendly architecture, accessibility, and their collective impact on religious tourist satisfaction, revealing that while eco-friendly architecture exerts the most significant positive influence, indicating a clear preference for environmentally conscious infrastructure among tourists, sustainable spatial design elements contribute moderately, contingent upon their contextual integration with cultural and environmental factors, and accessibility exhibits a weaker correlation, suggesting its implicit functional role rather than a primary satisfaction driver, with the findings emphasizing the necessity for tourism destinations to holistically integrate sustain-

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able design, ecological practices, and inclusive accessibility to not only enhance tourist experiences but also ensure the long-term preservation of cultural and natural resources, positioning sustainability at the core of competitive differentiation in the evolving global tourism landscape.

INTRODUCTION

Interest in religion-based tourism, evident as a distinct arm and a growing sector in the global tourism sector, plays a vital role in discovering spiritual, cultural, and historical aspects of religious-based tourist attractions. This largely can be attributed to the fact that it targets different groups of worthy clients in a single location in the sense that it caters to pilgrims, persons in search of spirituality, as well as lovers of culture and history as carved by humanity in their most devout hours of worship (Bhatnagar & Rajaram, 2024; Kukreti et al., 2024c). However, the multifaceted impacts of the rising rates of religious tourism that now hosts millions of pilgrims each year are not without their risks (Bhatnagar et al., 2025; Sunori et al., 2025). If this phenomenon is allowed to proceed without regulation, the implications are severe. Unregulated religious tourism may cause negative consequences such as deteriorating the environment, downplaying religious values, and the commercialization of religion. This underscores the need for sustainable spatial design, an essential framework for reducing the negative social cost of religious tourism while improving the quality of the tourists' experience (R. Kumar, Singh, et al., 2025a; S. Mishra et al., 2025; Sathish, Selvaraju, et al., 2025). Sustainable spatial design involves responsible and efficient management of the tourism spaces to meet new demands of the increasing numbers of visitors within the appropriate environmental, social, cultural, and physical contexts and to create an even closer relationship between the tourist and the sacred environment.

Therefore, sustainability in religious tourism spatial design goes further than merely flexibility and creativity in religious buildings' design; it involves aspects such as tourist behavior, tourists' satisfaction with the tourism experience, and environmental management for sustainability (Bhateja et al., 2025; Sagu et al., 2025; Satapathy et al., 2025). At the heart of this discourse is the understanding that landscape patterns of religious tourism sites, the paths and circulation spaces, structures built, integration of open spaces, and provision of environment-friendly amenities significantly determine how tourists move around the site and, in the process, gain spiritual insights. Environmental education can be enhanced or promoted by well-designed physical spaces, while environmental degradation can be either enhanced or promoted by poorly designed physical spaces. Additionally, the appearance of sustainability in spatial design not only serves practical importance

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