

Master thesis

Spiritual tourism: study of youth travel to India

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Submission date: 14. November 2015

Place of thesis submission: Ljubljana, Slovenia

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Introduction

As famous quote of His Holiness the Dalai Lama about “*The Paradox of Our Times*”

“Is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers

Wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints

We spend more, but we have less.

We have bigger houses, but smaller families

More conveniences, but less time

We have more degrees, but less sense

More knowledge, but less judgment

More experts, but more problems

More medicines, but less wellness“

As many spiritual leaders also rising number of academic scholars recognized the need and urge to take an action, if humanity want to sustain future of this world and make it a better place to live in. In relation to previous quote of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, it is apparent that controversial world of 21st century however satisfy almost all of our material needs, but on other hand it result in environmental damages and emotional and psychological traumas (Elgin & Mitchel, 2003; McIntosh & Mansfeld, 2005).

Scholar claim that the one who are the most affected by trends of modern and secular society are the contemporary youth called Millennials (Gidley & Inayatullah, 2002). There is a believe that however they represent generation who was already born in the postmodern world and therefore always had to face the challenges it creates, but on other hand due to the opportunities contemporary youth have today, they can bring the change to this world (Benckendorff & Moscardo, 2010). This hope relies upon the arguments, that millennials have the potential to become future leaders and reshape the world and society if the development of right values, attitudes and behaviours they obtain are supported to grow (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

There is a believe that, one of the strong influential opportunities comes with leisure activities and especially international travel, which when is carefully planned and oriented towards

certain goal, can bring transformation as on personal level also to the broader society and the world (Heintzman, 2013). However, there are numerous forms of tourism which can fulfil this goal, but as in this inauthentic world of materialism and rising secularisation people start to seek for their true self and meaning of life, growing industry of spiritual tourism attract more and more people recently, with hope that after this self oriented journey they will return back home, healed, stronger, changed and ready to face challenges of this world with more courage (Reinsinger, 2013). Recent studies shows, that spiritual travelling is one of the key form of tourism with the strongest transformational power on the humanity (Heintzman, 2013).

However more scholars recognized importance of contemporary youth (Benckendorff & Moscardo 2007, in WTO, 2008) and their role and influence on tourism policies, there is still lack of information related to this segment in tourism literature (Reinsinger, 2013). Studies related to youth are predominantly gathered around the form of travelling as volunteer tourism, backpacking or education tourism, however concrete transformation tourism literature doesn't study this segment specifically and even less in relation to the spiritual tourism (Demeter & Bratucu, 2014). Scholars claims that however there is a rising popularity of this form of travelling which is mirrored in the rising interest of researchers into the topic, yet Bremer (2005) argued that studies of spiritual and specifically of religion within concept of tourism field are predominantly concentrating around 3 themes: comparing pilgrims with tourists in the spatial places, try to draw relationship between religion and tourism and describe pilgrimage and tourism in postmodern concept (Timothy and Olsen, 2006, p. 2). Moreover, studies shows that as transformation and spiritual tourism are closely influenced by the character of the place and the knowledge in this sphere is scarce, this thesis will contribute to this topic.

Therefore the purpose of this thesis is to deepen knowledge within the tourism literature related as to youth, transformation and spiritual tourism. More due to its multidimensional character contribution of this thesis is in benefit for fields of youth psychology and studies of humans development at the same time expanding the knowledge about transformation of youth, while answering following research questions:

RQ1: How does spiritual tourism experiences can enhance transformation of youth and their life as a whole?

RQ2: What role does India plays as culturally spiritual place in the process of youth transformation?

Further sections of the thesis author divides into five main chapters. In the first chapter named *Literature Review*, reader will find theoretical background of the studied topics, which are drawn through gathering knowledge from previous studies in the fields of interest. Firstly this chapter clarify topic of contemporary youth and their importance for this study, further on moving through the topic of transformational tourism, spiritual tourism and transformation in the field of spiritual tourism. As those studies result in the knowledge that the place has a particular power in the process of transformation in the last lines of this chapter reader finds information related to the transformational potential of the place.

Second chapter is called Methodology, where author first of all introduce the India as a place to which studies are related and followed up with providing explanation of the whole research process which explain research paradigm, design and approach, method of data collection method, sampling and data analysis method.

In third chapter *Analysis* findings are presented, organized in two section according to research questions. First section answer research question about spiritual tourism experiences and transformational outcomes which is divided into four main themes Spiritual growth, Personal development towards self actualization, All is in your attitude, New values, new life and discussed with linking to the literature and each theme is further divided into few sub themes. Second part aim to answer how does the culturally spiritual place as India influence process of transformation. In this part reader will find two main themes Soul of the place and Contrasting culture, which are discussed under several sub themes.

The fourth chapter calls *Discussion* where most important findings will be discussed more in depth in relation to previous literature, meanwhile limitations and recommendation for further research will be described and the whole thesis will be closed by *Conclusion*.

1 Literature Review

1.1 Contemporary youth in 21st century

Pablo Coelho (2011, p.1) *“The world has never been as divided as it is now, with religious wars, genocides, lack of respect for the planet, economics crisis, depression, poverty, with everyone wanting instant solutions to at least some of the world’s problems of their own. And things only look bleaker as we head into the future.”*

As one of the most respected spiritual leaders of this time His Holiness the Dalai Lama said in his well known quote *“The Paradox of Our Age”* we live in so controversial world which on one side open many doors to make our lives easier and provide us with unlimited opportunities (Singh, 2006 & Lansley, 1993) on other hand that what we call as material or technological development cause on other hand social and environmental exploitation which is the barrier to our complete happiness and promotes the feeling of emptiness (Elgin & Mitchel, 2003; Hartmann, 1999; Lengfelder & Timothy, 2000; McIntosh & Mansfeld, 2005). Scholars stress, that in order to sustain better future and create better world to live in, it is human responsibility to take a lead and first start with change within themselves what will automatically leads towards the change of world (Reinsinger, 2013; Heintzman, 2013 & Timothy & Olsen, 2006).

Scholars believe that main problems are caused by the trends of 21st century world, as materialism (Singh, 2006) and with that related secularism (Elias, 1991; Timothy & Conover, 2006). They argued that those trends are responsible for increasing individual problems of society as stress, depression, feeling of emptiness, alienation (Ambrož & Ovsenik, 2011, p. 72), and in broader sense are the cause of environmental, economical and various global problems (McIntosh & Mansfeld, 2005). Scholars claims that most affected by the trends of today world are contemporary youth who are the generation which was already born to those conditions and always had to face it (Gidley & Inayatullah, 2002). Mason (2004) claim that mainly contemporary youth are the generation which is predominantly affected by secular society, what means that they are losing believe and trust in the traditional organized institutionalized religion (mostly linked to Christian believes).

Contemporary youth are called by various names as Generation Y or Gen Y, Millennials, Net Gen, Gen-Next (McCrindle, 2006; Best & Kellner, 2001), and it is the generation of postmodern society. It became very challenging to define boundaries and concept of youth, because there is not clear definition which would be widely accepted regarding to the age limitation of contemporary youth generation (Best & Kellner, 2001) or exact description. Some scholars claim that this generation include everyone who was born since 1977 (Best & Kellner, 2001), others argue that after 1980 (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002) and Wessels & Steenkamp (2009) suggest beginning year of contemporary youth as 1982. In contrary Nugent (2005, p.2) provide broader concept of youth which is not linked only age limitation but rather he sees contemporary youth as "all people within specific age group, or as a specific state of being or even a state of mind."

In the review of Wyse Travel Confederation (2011) is emphasized that traditional age limitation of youth travelers 18-24 is today extended to 15- 30+. This have been argued as a result of today young adults lifestyle, who leave traditional modern loyalties as for example rising kids, follow family or church structure, finish school or get a job for later and live youth lifestyle longer and alike keep travelling in a way characteristic to youth travelling for longer (UNWTO & Wyse Travel Confederation, 2012; Nugent, 2005). As is seen theories widely vary, but predominantly used age framework consider Gen Y as people who were born between 1980 and 1994 (Gorman et al, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2000). To this regard author frame the category of youth by age limitation between 18 – 35 years for the purpose of this thesis and trough the text they can be referred as contemporary youth, youth or any other from earlier mentioned synonyms.

Existing literature provide two very controversial perspectives about contemporary youth. On one hand youth are often perceived under the lenses of negative terms as for example The New Lost Generation or Nowhere Generation (Lerner, 2005). As a generation of computers, play stations, technological advices as computer and video games (Howe & Strauss, 1993). They are often tagged as by researchers also by society as a rebellious or lots generation (Lerner, 2005) and sometimes even labeled as cynical and ignorant (Bloom, 1987).

In contrary to those negative labeling of youth Best & Kellner (2001) emphasized that researchers and public forgot to look on other group of youth who participate in different volunteering and political activities and who are very skilled, well educated and ethically oriented (Howe & Strauss, 2000). They also argued that youth today have attributes of good habits as modesty and are team work oriented (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Also Hall (2013) emphasized in her work Rosenau's (1992) finding that young postmodern generation is more concerned about own needs on behalf of those traditional affiliation. Research shows that postmodern young adults are strongly self oriented and individual what is the phenomenon of this era (Hall, 2013), she also believes that this self or personal value creation leads to development of values what create lack of restlessness what they can rely on or to hold on to.

Howe & Strauss (2000) stress, that according to national survey which was conducted in USA, only little part of previous generation can really see the potential of youth to become active and responsible adults who can transform this world to be a better place. To this concern Lerner, Roeser & Phelps (2008) believe that if young adults are appropriately guided towards development of the right assets, they have a potential to be a leaders to bring positive contribution and thus impact on the society. Best & Kellner, (2001, p. 1) stress that *"Contemporary youth are major players in the postmodern adventure because it is them who will enter the future and further shape the world to come."* Such potential is recognized also by United Nations who claims that young people have strong power to influence development and bring social change (UNWTO & Wyse Travel Confederation, 2012). Howe and Strauss (2000) also stress that contemporary generation of young people will become important generation of adults who will shape better future of this world through their activism.

Those postmodern young individuals as Rosenau (1992) argued are individuals who are skeptical towards modern world phenomena and they generation of flexible and relaxed individuals, who actively create their own social reality and seek for meaning in the life through various activities as for instance is travelling (Richard & Wilson, 2003). Travel is not anymore only related to the pleasure but also helping to find a meaning of oneself lives, include spiritual experience (McIntosh & Mansfeld, 2006) and contribute to the self development through life changing experiences (Wilson & Harris, 2006). Especially seeking for meaningful travel is essential among the youth travellers (Generation Y) who changed

classical concept of “holiday” tourism towards “purposeful” travelling when they seek to gain new knowledge in order to grow and develop personally, gain meaningful experiences and transform themselves in a believe that they will transform whole society one day (Benckendorff & Moscardo, 2010).

Demeter & Bratucu (2014) also stress that travelling of youth is not about escaping from their daily life but it is part of their daily life and it is not separated from it. They also argue that young people travel for a specific purpose to learn, meet other people, get in touch with other cultures, for career and self development and also travelling is kind of identity creation for youth visit (UNWTO & Wise Travel Confederation, 2012). Studies also show that while younger millennials seek more for excitement, exploring and new knowledge while travel, older ones who are above 26 years are attracted to challenging destinations rather (Richards & Wilson, 2003). They claim that travelling in less developed countries where one get in touch with poverty and challenging environments and cultures, is more in benefit to their personal growth. International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC) together with UNESCO recognized this importance and benefit of travelling for youth what is mirrored in their aspiration to promote and make tourism accessible to all youth by their supportive programs (Richards & Wilson, 2003). Also international organization as WTO (2008) claims that *“Young travelers will be tomorrow’s globally-oriented citizens, leaders in future travel trends, and pioneers in contributing to the Millennium Development Goals.”*

Considering all what was previously mentioned, contemporary youth are recognized as important generation for future development of society and as shown in research and emphasized in WTO report *Youth Travel Matters* (2008) this growing segment becoming important for tourism industry thus there is need for better understanding of this market. However as shown in Annual Report of Johnson Control (2010) there is around 1,7 billion young adults, what represent 25,5 % of total world population worldwide, yet there is not enough attention paid to this segment in tourism literature (Benckendorff & Moscardo 2007, in WTO, 2008). Even though there is interest in young generation studies in academic field, in tourism literature studies which focus on specific segment are mainly discussing senior tourism (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002; Benckendorff & Moscardo, 2007 in WTO, 2008) and understanding of youth is still scared and limited. Research considering youth within the tourist literature is mainly concentrated around studies of backpacking, volunteering and

educational tourism, cultural exchange or work and travel (Demeter & Bratucu, 2014) however in spiritual studies, there is lack of information regarding to this segment and even less under the concept of transformation tourism. Therefore author decide to focus this studies towards exploring transformational potential of spiritual tourism in relation to youth of 21st century, what she discuss in following chapters.

1.2 Human transformation in tourism studies

While searching through the literature related to transformation tourism, it is apparent that scholars start to recognize transformational power and importance of tourism in relation to the human development and growth. Gazley, (2001) and Kelly & Smith (2006) claims, that tourism undoubtedly leads towards transformation of personal and global understanding and awareness, foster personal growth, provide a space for learning and new knowledge creation, but also increase opening of one's mind. Ateljevic (2011) takes it even further and she believes that tourism can bring transformation of the world, through the transformation of individuals, who will manifest their personal change trough their activities for well being of broader society.

One of the significant work which contributes to this topic are books *Transformational Tourism: Tourist Perspective* and *Transformational Tourism: Host Perspective* from Reinsinger (2013). She provides evidence, that various form of tourism enhance personal development, growth and self-actualization (Dirkx, 1998), which are the core of transformational process and leads toward overall well-being of humans. In her studies she includes work of several scholars who prove transformational power of traveling as for example volunteer tourism (Erdely,2013), educational tourism (Brown, 2013), nature based tourism (Dewille & Wearing, 2013), backpacking (Kanning, 2013), adventure sport tourism (Brymer, 2013) wellness or spiritual tourism (Heintzman, 2013 & Smith, 2013). Those studies claim, that people through the tourism experiences and situation what they went through report certain transformational outcomes (Reinsinger, 2013).

Just to name few, for example Kannings' (2013) study shows, that backpackers returning back home after long term international journey experienced not only transformation on

personal level as self-awareness, but also their outlook of the world and relationship with broader society changed. As they become aware about their own needs and believes, they become more sensitive to their own priorities over the opinion and influence of society, what also influenced their relationships with others and broader community (Kanning, 2013). Another scholars shows that nature related tourism as organic farming (Deville & Wearing, 2013) or extreme sport tourism (Brymer, 2013) bring several transformational outcomes as increased intercultural, personal and environmental awareness and enhanced relationships with others. Studies proves that travelling to other cultures in order to serve as a volunteer or for totally different purpose as to experience adventure of extreme sports changed and affected whole lifestyle of person after returning back home (Brymer, 2013 & Grabowski, 2013).

However there are numerous forms of tourism which provides experiences with various transformational outcomes, yet scholars argued that not all forms of tourism have a potential to trigger transformational process (O'Reilly, 2006). For instance O'Reilly (2006) emphasizes the case of business or mass tourism, as form of travelling where is less likely that person get transformed or changed trough tourist experiences. As the main reason Reinsinger (2013) identifies lack of interaction and close contact with local community which is one of important factors in the process of transformation. Auges' (1995) also shows another case of tourism form related to resort-holiday, which transformational potential is very limited. Reinsinger (2013) argues that such tourism doesn't offer enough challenging environment which would push individual take steps necessary for transformation.

1.2.1 Conditions for transformation through tourism

From those perspectives author understand that there are certain attributes and conditions which are necessary in order to trigger and manifest transformational process trough tourism activities and experiences. As travelling related to moving within unfamiliar places and countries, individuals get exposed to contrasting environments, situations and experiences as he/she is used to (ex. climate, traditions and nature), what causes that person can feel some kind of inner confusion, cultural shock (Lyon, 2002) or disorienting dilemma (Taylor, 2008). Due to facing new contrasting situation to which individual is not able to react through existing values, attitudes and behavior anymore, situation triggers feeling of inner crisis,

when he or she is trying to adapt to new experience (Reinsinger, 2013 and Taylor, 2008). In other words, the process of adaptation is the process when one has to rethink his or her old attitudes and behaviors and reshape it in order to be able to function under new circumstances individual is facing. Nowaczek (2013) believes that in such a process individual psychological (self-awareness), behavioral and convictional (believes, values, worldviews) attributes get deeply transformed (Tomljenovic, n.d.). Morgan (2010) claims that travelling is not solely about physical movements from place of residence to another place, but it has great influence on one's psychological development. This factor Morgan (2010) in his studies emphasizes and describes three main aspects which plays significant role of transformational process through tourism and travelling experiences as following: "it is the places encountered (of departure and return, the destination, and those encountered en route), coupled with the actions, intentions, and experiences of the "traveler" which become crucial dimensions that facilitate or hinder transformation" (Mezirow, 2000, p.249).

From beforehand mentioned, it can be understood that person during the travelling has to face sort of challenging situation in order to personally grow and develop and thus as Reinsinger (2013) claims, there are certain conditions necessary for transformation while traveling. To start with Tomljenovic (n.d.) emphasized Hottolas (2014) believe that tourists have to travel independently and one have to get in touch with local community and get involved in their culture which will require new adaptation. To this concern Deville & Wearing (2013) studies about organic farming journey proves, that close relationship and interactions with host families was one of the key factors which has great influence on personal self-understanding and awareness.

Mezirov (1991) stress that for the transformation as personal crisis the same critical reflection has to occur in order to change mind settings and behavioral patterns of person. For those perspectives Reisinger (2013) claims that experiencing new contrasting environments or situations to what one is used to are necessary. As proved Narayanan and Macbeth (2009) when humans were transformed due to very contrasting experience they had while travelling with 4WD in dessert. This experience was not only challenging what triggered inner crises or disorienting dilemma (Mezirow 1991) but also natural settings of dessert give person a space for contemplation and self-reflection. Reinsinger (2013) also stress importance of activities supportive for self-reflection as during the journey (meditation, spiritual retreats) as also after

tourists return back home. She also claims, that emotions are important player in process of transformation and deeper the emotions are as fear or anxiety the deeper personal change is. For instance people who had close to death experiences and face fear as in the case of extreme sport tourism, report that their attitude towards life changed and they started to more appreciate life and they felt more emotionally, spiritually and psychologically balanced (Brymer, 2013).

Moreover, Reinsinger (2013b) also argues that for the transformation not only the place and experiences are significant, but motivation and intention of tourist participating in journey plays important role. With her argument agreed also other scholars who claims that individual have to have aspiration to change or to learn something new in order to personally grow (Ross, 2010 and Brown, 2009). This is mainly a case of spiritual tourism when one is travelling in order to find deeper self, wish to change through seeking new knowledge and understanding of self and meaning of world (Heintzman, 2013) as also educational tourism which is inherently related to learning process (Brown, 2013). To this concern Heintzman (2013) study also proves that some form of travelling have better potential and transformational power over the other what is related predominantly to the motivation and intention why person is travelling. This can be shown on the case of extreme sport tourism, which has potential to transform as already mentioned, however when person have no spiritual relation to the nature and only interest he/she has is the hardship and challenge of the sport, transformation would be diminished (Heintzman, 2013).

1.2.2 Understanding process of transformation

Considering all earlier mentioned, scholars try to understand conditions and requirements which are necessary to trigger and manifest process of transformation through tourist experiences. They believe that tourism is not inherently transformative (Reinsinger, 2013), but under certain travel conditions transformation is triggered and progressed (Hottola, 2014). Kanning (2013) in his studies argues, that researchers broadly agreed on 3 components which are required in the process of transformation as following: *disorienting dilemma, critical reflection and rational discourse* (p.126).

Author believes that before moving to explain transformational process it is essential to shortly clarify meaning and concept of transformation.

Poutiatine (2008, in Reisinger, 2013) highlights that one should not confuse transformation with change, but better understand transformation as a process which brings the change. In other words aim of the transformation is to change and adjust human believes and attitudes towards enhanced personal development and growth (Clark, 1993), what finally results in behavioral change. Dirkx (1998) relate transformation to the growth, what is process which leads towards personal change construction of new self. This happens when person replace his old believes and meaning structures with a new one (Daloz, 1986, in Dirkx, 1998). On the way towards the personal growth trough individual consciousness is transformed (Dirkx, 1998).

Dirkx (1998) argues that person consciousness is enhanced when individual realize and become conscious about what he wasn't aware before. Increased consciousness is correlating with increased knowledge and awareness of self and world (Dirkx, 1998). He also argues that one can shape new self only when he or she is conscious about old self, only then one can create new meanings. To put it into the frame, in the core of the transformational process is to aim of human self-actualization (Dirkx, 1988). Self-actualization is placed at the top of Maslow (1971) hierarchy of needs and he refers to it as achievement of personal potential or human development beyond self (Greeny & Burke, 2007). Dirkx (1988) also argued that we as humans are limited by certain factors, which limit us to understand our real potential. Trough the process of transformation person can identify those barriers which are the limitation to be who we really are and he or she can become true or authentic self.

Steps towards transformation

Kanning (2013) explains, that transformational process starts only when person is facing trigger event or situation, which inner crisis (Santalucia & Johnson, 2010) or disorienting dilemma (Mezirov, 1991). Challenging situation causes that person starts to seek for alternative and better applicable solutions, because old one doesn't serve to the new situation anymore. There are various forms how disorienting dilemma or personal crisis can occurs. It can vary from dramatic events (for example death of relatives, accident), trough series of

small events which person might not be even aware of, or person consciously decide that he wants to make a change or it is even part of natural development process (Santalucia & Johnson, 2010). Taylor (1998) argues, that disorienting dilemma can be expressed as internal personal (psychological, cognitive and emotional) or external crises (for example influence of socio-cultural or natural environment) or integrating circumstances, what provokes that one start to search for meaning or something what is missing in his/her life, and search for alternative solutions to the dilemma (Taylor, 1998 in Reinsinger, 2013, p.18).

Kanning (2013) stress that even though disorienting dilemma occurs, without critical reflection transformation would not occurs. This process is called “critical reflection” or critical “self-reflection” which is the channel for transformation what was also emphasized by Taylor (2007). Argument is supported by study of Bell et. all (2014) who highlight Petersons’ (2002) argument that however experiences are very important, if it is not connected with critical reflection they would not transform persons’ perceptions. In the previous studies and especially in the studies of spiritual tourism, individuals always refer to time to rethink as an important factor on their path towards change (Heintzman, 2013; Brymer, 2013 & Grabowski, 2013).

As the third step in transformational process Kanning (2013) named rational discourses, which is related to Mezirows (1991) meaning perspectives. In this phase of process person translate and make meaning out of what he experiences. It is ”the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and future action” (Mezirow, 1991, p.11). In other words, person translate and make a meaning from situation he is facing to and individual attitudes, values, feelings, and knowledge are updated what influence how person acts and behave in certain situation (Reinsinger, 2013).

From all earlier mentioned, it is apparent that some forms of tourism have more transformational power over the other forms, but yet there is not unified and broadly accepted definition which would clearly clarify condition and typology of transformative tourism (Reinsinger, 2013). To this concern Tomljenovic (n.d., p.14) propose definition as following *“Transformative tourism is a type of tourism where tourists participate in travel that offers a high level of immersion with the host culture through backpacking, volunteer,*

educational/study abroad, ecological/nature based and cultural/creative programs. Their key foundation is the engagement in activities designed for personal and spiritual development – through particular forms of primarily spiritual/religious travel; wellness/health tourism; and/or immersion in nature through rural tourism and extreme sports.”

As apparent from beforehand definition spiritual tourism is the form which has undoubtedly transformational power and has ability not only bring personal change and growth, but through self development people could obtain new skills and outlooks (ex. altruism or compassion) which motivates them towards action for social justice and betterment of world (Heintzman, 2013). As cited words of Pandit Acharya Shriram Sharma, (cit. Shri Vedmata Gayatri Trust, 2014, p. 47) *"Agents of Transformational Change must first express within themselves the characteristics they seek to promote in society."* In the core of transformational process is to obtain personal and spiritual growth (Tomljenovic, n.d.) what is the main aim and intention of spiritual tourists (Norman, 2012) through various spiritual activities as for example retreats, pilgrimage (religious or secular), yoga and etc. Due to the rising interest of spiritual tourism and insufficient understanding of this phenomenon, this study is related to investigate transformational power of tourism on spiritual tourist, what author discuss more in details in following chapter.

1.3 Transformation through spiritual tourism

Before to move towards transformation through spiritual tourist experiences, author believes that it is necessary to clarify the concept of spiritual tourism in order to provide base or frame for this thesis.

1.3.1 Studies of spiritual tourism

Despite of growing interest in spirituality among scholars, until recent time in tourism literature there is still lack of appropriate knowledge regarding to this phenomena. Smith and Kelly (2006) argue that spirituality is becoming more buzz-word in recent times and thus also to provide clear and unique concept and characteristic of spiritual tourism becoming very challenging in today's research. Predominantly in earlier tourism studies, spiritual tourism was not considered as individual form of tourism, but was mainly related to other forms of

tourism and tourist have been classified either as religious, pilgrims, special interest, cultural and experiential tourists (Haq & Jackson 2009, p. 142). However in more recent studies, scholars emphasize the need for exclusive and widely accepted definition/concept of spiritual tourism, which was not yet successfully established (Herntrei & Pechlaner 2011; Timothy & Olsen 2006; Tilson 2005).

Knowledge about spiritual tourism developed and changed over the time and provided classifications are widely different and not unified (Smith, 1992; Sharply & Sundram, 2005). Timothy and Olsen (2006) in their studies emphasized Bremer's division of spiritual tourism concentration within academic field. Bremer (2005) argued that studies of spiritual and specifically of religion within concept of tourism field are predominantly concentrating around 3 themes: comparing pilgrims with tourists in the spatial places, try to draw relationship between religion and tourism and describe pilgrimage and tourism in postmodern concept (Timothy and Olsen, 2006, p. 2). They also argued that only Vukonič (1996) took the studies of pilgrimage in different direction and discuss phenomenon in more holistic manner. At the same time they highlight importance of contribution to more holistic approach in tourism literature (Timothy and Olse, 2006). In order establish framework for this thesis within spiritual tourism concept, author believes that is essential to take look at existing literature trough history and provide understanding of concept evolution until recent time.

Kosti (1998, p.5) emphasizes negative correlation between increased interest in spiritual tourism and pilgrimage in both religious as well as secular context with decrease in traditional religion believe (Nolan and Nolan, 1992). MacCannell (1973) refers this trend to the modern society situation when people feel more dislocated and rootless and thus they try to "seek for themselves" (Voyé, 2002, p. 123) in order to give a sense to their life, trough new points of view what this form of travelling offers in authentic settings (Paasi, 2003).

For the centuries was spiritual tourism regarded and framed under the concept of traditional religious believes and mostly it was related with traditional pilgrimage (Mansfeld and McIntosh, 2007). Spiritual tourism in the religious context was defined by scholars as a form of tourism, in which tourists were participating in order to fulfill their faith, religion or spiritual needs (Smith, 1992; Sharply & Sundram, 2005; Haq & Medhekar, 2012). Vukonič (1996) defined traditional religiously oriented pilgrimage as a journey which individuals take

in order to “seek truth, holiness and sacred” (p. 80). Additionally Barber (1993, p.1) characterized traditional pilgrimage “as a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding”. Looking at the studies of religious or spiritual tourism, several studies discuss connection between pilgrimage and tourism (Smith, 1992 & Graburn, 1989). In this traditional concept of pilgrimage the religion was seen as a center of the pilgrimage and religious travelers were also named as pilgrims in the terminology. Smith (1992) argued that term pilgrimage is in the studies related to the religious or spiritual journey which is characterized predominantly by visiting sacred places and shrines.

However in more recent studies, there is an evidence and emphasis on shift from traditional pilgrimage and religious character of spiritual tourism towards various secular and transcendent spiritual tourism activities which provide more abstract and holistic experiences to balance body, mind and spirit (Smith & Kelly, 2006, Timothy and Olsen, 2006). Swatos and Tomas (2002) bring insight in their studies about traditional paradigm switch towards new or modern tourism phenomena. Moreover Collins-Kreiner (2010) also highlights shift from old religiously oriented paradigm of pilgrimage towards secular character of pilgrimage and spiritual journey. Collins-Kreiner (2010) divide spiritual journey into two categories: traditional (religious) and modern (secular) spiritual journey. Furthermore they argued that in recent time more and more pilgrims are attracted to the second form of pilgrimage, when spiritual tourists seek for authentic experiences in more secular way, as for instance through connection to the nature and yoga.

Timothy and Olsen (2006) in their book *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys* explain this process of shifting paradigm of spiritual tourism from religious towards modern (secular) approach. They emphasized effect of modern world trends as one of the reason why this shift in consumption of religious or spiritual travelling occurs. They argued that one of the reasons behind it is its rising secularization of modern society, when trust in traditional religion is doubted because of the corruption in traditional institutionalized religion. They argued that people lose trust in traditional religion and that's why they start to search for answers about the meaning and purpose of life through other non-traditional religious beliefs which goes beyond conventional and institutionalized religion (especially eastern). Hellas (1996) also

emphasized that this is especially typical for New Age spirituality, who don't consider central authority anymore as a foundation of truth.

Some also called this act as „spiritual revolution“ which refers to rising secular spirituality, when people turn towards so called transcendent spirituality while connect to something beyond self and also beyond religion (Smith and Puczkó, 2014). As a support to this argument they also highlight Millers' (1994) statement who believes that “people needs to believe in something to give them an hope” (Smith and Puczkó, 2014, p. 21) and that's why they seek for alternative forms in a time of rising secularization, when traditional institutional religion failed to fulfill their needs and provides shelter in time of hardship. In order to relate to this statement, Ambrož and Ovsenik (2011) highlight the believe in their studies that tourists seeking more and more meaning of life trough the tourism experiences and use it as a mean towards “themselves” or to find their true self in hope to change their life for better. This is predominantly characterized for New Age spiritual tourists who believes in divine power which lies within all human beings and this divine energy is believed to be source of personal inner transformation (Heelas, 1992).

Considering those contrasting arguments, other perspective on spiritual tourism arising. Either spiritual tourism is pursued under the religion framework or it is seen more as consumption of secular activities some researchers agreed that terms spirituality and religion are closely related and thus can't be totally separated (Marra, 2000; Elias, 1991; Vaughan, 1991). On one hand it can be argued that in New Age spirituality and religion are going in opposite directions and are not related. Heelas (1985, p. 5) support this argument by emphasizing that one can have spiritual experience even without religious believes.

But on other hand is argued that even in new approach of spiritual travelling which is more secular, religion still plays important role, but it goes beyond the traditional institutionalized religion (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). To this concern Heelas (1996) also emphasized that even though New Agers doesn't rely on one traditional institutionalized religion, but rather they are interested in various philosophies and religious believes and take from each what they believe is the best and important from those believes. Also he argues that New Agers believe that in the core each religion and philosophy is in final stage talking about the same and try to give the same teaching and message (Heelas, 1996). This New Age movement of society

Smith (2003) called as multi-faith, when people creating their personal spiritual framework through combining various religions (preferably Eastern traditions) and philosophies.

What she means by this argument, is that people today don't follow one religious tradition and don't incline to one or other religious believe, but rather see their personal spirituality through combining multiple religious traditions (Smith, 2003). To this concern she argued, that travelling gives people an opportunity to seek various religious believes, and connect with those traditions in a case that they are not able to do so in their normal (home) environment (Smith, 2003). As for instance many tourists visiting India for authentic spiritual experiences under the religious guidance, what it provides as it is considered as home of spirituality and religious practices (Smith and Puczko, 2014).

To this topic Norman (2011) work has a significant contribution. In his studies he argued that neither modern spirituality is completely separated from the religion, but it changed its character. What he tried to say is that even spiritual journey is framed by the religion and religious traditions, in today meaning is more individually and self-oriented (Norman, 2011). He characterized spiritual tourists or pilgrims as tourists who move toward spiritual practices in a secular way and all activities as for example yoga, meditation, and pilgrimage or prayers have explicitly personal meaning for spiritual tourists (Norman, 2011). He studied experiences of spiritual tourists according to which he created 5 categories of spiritual tourists which will be discussed more in details in following chapter discussing transformation of spiritual tourists.

For this research beforehand mentioned Norman's (2011, p.) framework of Modern spirituality will be applied, and thus spiritual tourism is perceived as following: Spiritual tourism is a form of tourism through which tourists seek for spiritual growth and improvement through the consumption of spiritual practices during their travel, in order to gain spiritual benefit.

As earlier argued, either spiritual tourism is executed under religious framework and traditions or in contrary it has more secular character, spirituality and religion can't be fully separated. Thus even if it is highly framed by the religion or spiritual activities have more secular character, what is essential for spiritual travel are experiences and intentions of participants which are explicitly self-oriented and directed to fulfill individual's personal and

spiritual needs (Norman, 2011). However his concept was criticized as broad and not specific, author agrees with Normans 'definition and believes that this framework is the best suitable for the study of this thesis.

1.3.2 Transformation of spiritual tourists

As already mentioned, process of transformation can't be forced process and either it can occurs through natural process and unexpectedly (Reinsinger, 2013), or trough intentional desire of person to learn or change something (Mezirow, 1991). As Yannakis and Gibson (1992) concludes, transformational power of spiritual tourism is embedded especially in intentions of spiritual tourists which motivates them towards particular activities in hope that they will change themselves and their life (Smith and Kelly, 2006), through the self-actualization (Maslow, 1971). Therefore, author believes that especially in a case of spiritual tourism it is necessary to understand experiences as a whole, therefore to understand who are the spiritual tourists and their intentions is essential. To this concern transformational experiences will be framed under 5 categories of spiritual tourists what proposes Norman (2012). To put it in other words, author's main aim is not to study and investigate motivations of spiritual tourists in this thesis, but she believes that it is beneficial to understand what kind of expectations and intentions spiritual tourists have, what determine the activities in which they participate and which create particular transformational experiences. To this regard, as beforehand mentioned as Normans '(2012) concept is adapted to this studies, his division of spiritual tourists experiences which depict their intention. Norman also stress, that however there are certain differences among spiritual tourists as characterized earlier, yet spiritual tourists experiences are overlapping in many spheres and more than one category can be applicable for certain spiritual experience (Norman, 2012).

Concept of spiritual tourist experiences and intentions Alex Norman (2012):

Norman argues that in order to study tourists it is necessary first to understand them who they are and what kind of experiences they seek and why. Thus through understanding of the story of people he divided spiritual tourists into 5 categories: Spiritual tourist experiences as *Quest*, *Healing*, *Experimental*, *Retreat* and *Collective* which will be explained in following lines.

1. *Spiritual tourists experiences as a Quest (Norman, 2012, p. 30)*

For those spiritual tourists not activities or places itself are important, but rather they are motivated to travel to places with spiritual or religious significance in order to find true self or authentic self, what they consider as the spiritual experience itself. Such experiences results in better understanding or enhancement of *self-knowledge* and rise *self-awareness*. They leave their home in hope that they will find who they really are. He relates such tourists to pilgrims who are searching and expect something special to be found in the end of their journey. Cohen's (1979) also argued that tourists are moving away from their daily routine in order to find their real self or true self and as Norman (2012) and Berman (1970) argued this can be reached through the authentic tourist experiences.

Such an experiences are examined in Heintzman (2013) studies who provides Androitis (2009) research about transformational experiences of spiritual tourists taking their journey in Monastic community Athos in Greece. Spiritual tourists who stay in the monastery undoubtedly belong to this category because as research shows, most of them visited Athos due to spiritual motivations as strengthen their believe and faith (Androitis, 2009 in Reinsinger, 2013). Participants reported that their intention wasn't to visit monastery as tourists, but their journey was solely inner oriented focus on inner work trough, praying, meditation and devotion to the God, and travelling was just secondary factor. Androitis (2009) stress that this journey was definitely transformational and individuals spiritually growth (self-actualization) was enhanced as well as personal transformation occurred and due to the opportunities of spiritual practices and supportive environment and circumstances their connection with God and their faith were enhanced (Heintzman, 2013). Visitors also claimed, that besides of spiritual atmosphere of the place and separation from the world of distraction, natural settings and quietness of the place played important role in the process of spiritual transformation and inner development.

2. *Spiritual tourists experiences as Experimental*

To this category are linked spiritual tourists who are not related or attached only to one believe religion, but rather they are trying to find the true within all possible alternatives (Norman, 2012). Norman argues that among activities of those tourists Eastern traditions are playing important role and spiritual tourists travel to culturally spiritual places (Smith, 2013) as India or Thailand to obtain authentic experience with those religious practices (p. 29). So

in other words, according to their definition spiritual tourists are motivated to take certain trip and use it as a mean to find answers about themselves as well as about purpose of the life. MacCannell (1976) argues that modern tourists travel to other places in order to find what they are missing in their inauthentic lives back home (Boorstin, 1964). This could include tourists who are using spiritual journey as an alternative to their daily life when they face some difficulties and they are “in need for time and space to review and reflect.

Heintzman (2013) in his studies claims that many spiritual tourists travel in order to obtain authentic experiences with certain religious practices or traditions. They aim to learn more about themselves and understand the real purpose and meaning of the life (Yiannakis and Gibson, 1992 in Reinsinger, 2013) under the wings of authentic spiritual traditions. For instance this kind of spiritual tourists travel to other destination especially with particular spiritual and religious traditions in order to participate in different activities as festivals, events, visit monasteries or secular places with religious or spiritual significance (Heintzman, 2013). He claims that such tourists are especially attracted to the places with certain significance as holy or sacred places. This study is related to monastery retreats and he claims that spiritual retreat experience leads towards several transformational outcomes: restoration when one felt that he or she regained back his strength, spiritual growth and transformation, transcendental experiences (highly spiritual, feeling of calmness and peace), eudemonic experiences (often related with negative feelings but oriented towards personal growth and higher meaning) and increased spiritual well-being (Heintzman, 2013, p. 79). He proves that spiritual benefits are greater when one is participating in retreats frequently. In this study he investigates how different forms of travelling can influence human spiritual well-being. The result shows that compare to other form of tourism, spiritual travelling is undoubtedly the form of tourism with the strongest potential of change.

He claims that the factors which plays significant role is the motivation of spiritual tourists who's aim is to spiritually grow and gain new knowledge about self and meaning of the life (Heintzman, 2013). Moreover, study proves that spiritual tourism, more concrete retreat tourism, is one of the best means how one can obtain spiritual development, and that the leisure activities have strong impact on individual's spiritual development. In this concern he stress that to enhance individual self-actualization it is very important that person participate in activities which are supportive to develop personal spirituality and growth, but also this

process is highly related to the place. What he tries to say is that human spiritual development is more likely to occur in the supportive places and environments (nature or places of particular importance) and when person gets disconnected from daily life distractions (Heintzman, 2013). He took it even further and stress that spiritual development and growth is not influencing only individual itself, but influence how person interact and behave in broader society, what is mirrored in the relationship with others. He claims that spiritually grown person develop qualities as altruism, compassion and service for others which change person from egocentric in person who is socially and environmentally aware and responsible (Heintzman, 2013). This then result that such a person satisfies his or her needs while serve toward a greater good.

3/4. Spiritual tourists experiences as Healing and Retreat

Norman (2012) emphasized that however those categories are pretty much alike, yet their motivation are in some point different. He found that both are mostly attracted to spiritual activities related to wellness as for instance holistic and spiritual retreats (Smith and Kelly, 2006). Tourists who are categorized as *Healing* are usually leaving their regular daily life due to some difficulties and hard times they had to face as for example death of relative, divorce or loose of job (Smith, 2013). They do so in hope to find solution and meaning during the journey and rise their psychical and emotional strength to be able to face the situation of daily life better and with more courage (Glouberman, 2002). They usually participate in various spiritual activities (secular and religious) which allow them time and space where they can go through self-reflection in order to find deeper meaning and heal during the hard times (Smith, 2013). To this concern Radel and Hillman (2013) call those tourists survival escapist, who as they found escaping from certain traumas and problem of their life, but not in order to relax on their journey, but instead to heal and grow stronger. Their study shows that when person disconnect with physical place related to their psychological problem, it allows them to heal and result in higher self-actualization and social change. Those experiences are many times related with strong and negative feelings and emotions, what as already argued before deepen personal transformation (Radel and Hillman, 2013).

On other hand Retreat spiritual tourists are in more escapist role (Smith, 2013) or going away from individuals' normal life (Reinsinger, 2013), however not solely due the psychological or emotional factors. They are more interested changing physical space towards other societies

and geographical places in order to escape from fast living and stressful society towards places where they don't feel pressure of daily life (Norman, 2012). In relation to this he however emphasized, that even this kind of tourists are not solely interested in spiritual betterment, in the end they can report self-improvement and meaningful outcomes of their experiences as in a case of tourist who try to find greater meaning (Smith, 2013).

Smith (2013) focus in her studies on the spiritual, mental, psychological and emotional side of the wellness tourism, where she studied transformational outcomes of holistic and spiritual retreats. Such retreats include various forms of secular as religious activities as for example yoga, meditation or psychological workshops as life coaching (Smith, 2013), which enhance self-development through improving emotional and spiritual well being of person. She claims that most of the visitors experienced transformation and personal change, due to the activities which allows individual to self-reflect and reconsider upon their life and themselves either in silence or through group dynamic. As holistic and spiritual retreats aim to enhance spiritual and emotional well-being (Puczkó and Smith, 2012), visitors reported that this spiritual journey helps them overcome their trouble times and increased their self awareness, improve their emotional and spiritual well-being and they found it easier to express their true self and feeling of joy (Polle, 1999 in Smith, 2013). Smith also found that however place as scenic landscape and peaceful environment played significant role in process of transformation, yet country where they participate in retreat was not in importance.

5. Spiritual tourist experiences as Collective

The fifth category which resulted from his research is the spiritual tourism as *Collective* experiences. In this group he includes people who travel to certain places or participate in activities just because others do it and those are fancy, trendy or prestigious what everyone who is on their spiritual seek has to visit or participate in it. "Just because others have done it" (Norman, 2012, p.33). To this concern he emphasized the case of Camino de Santiago, which become an icon and must among pilgrims. As a good example can be case of Rishikesh, which is just iconic place where all yoga spiritual tourists aim to. He argues that even during the spiritual journey person is mainly preoccupied by inner or self-development, to engage in community and collective activities is considered as a mean for enhancement and progression of those experiences (Norman, 2012).

Turner (1978, in Reinsinger, 2013) stress that even though spiritual tourists intention is predominantly oriented towards self-improvement and self-connection, important role in this process plays also group dynamics and trough collective activities one can obtain personal change (Smith, 2013). Trough feeling as a part of community with people who are like-minded and have similar intentions towards transformation, create motivating relationships which enhance individuals luminal experiences (Turner, 1978). Smith (2013) study shows that trough collective experiences human well-being was enhanced due to the feeling to being part of community and greater support to each other, what in final stage result in enhanced social responsibility. Also Heukels (2012) thesis prove that even though pilgrims of Santiago de Compostela were predominantly motivated to change themselves and their life, but they felt more attracted to this collective activity, which provide them with unique experiences and joy of spiritual travelling.

In order to give more structure to all what was previously said in this chapter, author believe that to summarize the outcomes is for benefit of reader to clearly understand attributes which were important for transformation an what are the transformational outcomes of spiritual tourism. From the existing studies concern about transformational potential of spiritual tourism, studies are predominantly oriented towards particular form of spiritual tourism as for example retreat or pilgrimage, but doesn't investigate spiritual tourism from more holistic perspective trough understanding spiritual traveling as a whole experience regardless of focusing on particular spiritual activities (Heintzman, 2013, Radell and Hillman, 2013, Smith, 2013).

From all what was said, there is no doubt that spiritual tourism is transformational and has a potential not only transform individuals but trough inner change the switch can be manifested in wider world trough their actions and behaviors. Heintzman (2013) highlights Voight et al. (2011, p.26) argument that it is "not surprising that retreats bring transformation because those are intentionally oriented towards enlightenment and spiritual progress and reflective experiences trough activities as meditation, yoga, philosophical or religious teachings" (Reinsinger, 2013p. 76). To this concern Heintzmain claims (2013) spiritual tourism has a greater transformational potential over other forms of tourism and he argues that this transformational power of spiritual tourism is related to the motivation of spiritual tourists towards self and world understanding.

Studies show, that besides motivation and supportive activities towards spiritual growth other attributes as for instance natural settings and supportive environments or communities play important role on the path towards enlightenment (Reinsinger, 2013). Scholars recognized that transformational outcomes are not solely individually oriented, but one while benefiting himself/herself through development, construct attributes of altruism and sense of justice which are in benefit of broader society and world. Heintzman (2013) push it even further and he emphasized the need to focus more attention towards spiritual tourist activities and promote in, which might strongly influence of world transformation through inner personal change which will manifest shift in outer world.

Chandler et al. (1992) relate in their studies to the Rings concept of spiritual transformation. He divided among 4 main categories which are characteristics for spiritual change or self-transformation of individual through self-development as following:

1. *Personality change*

Which incorporate characteristics as self-actualization, positive attitude towards self and greater authenticity. Self-actualization is in the top of Maslow hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1962). He argues that self-actualized person is in better reward for broader society, because due to the feeling of peace he has towards himself allows him to with greater values (Ponder and Holladay, 2013). They also argued that such person is more concern about broader society interests and wider world (Ponder and Holladay, 2013). Also Steiner and Reinsinger (2006) emphasize concept of existential authenticity is concept about being true to self and aware of own nature which is within us (Smith, 2013). They argued that when person develop his/her existential authenticity individual identity, individuality is increased and also meaning-making, happiness and anxiety are related.

2. *Value change*

Which result in persons higher concern towards other people and environment, individuals' increased appreciation of life and personal quest or searching of meaning of life and transformation of worldview. Lee and Gretzel (2013) studied short term mission tourists and they argued that through this experience they obtained as spiritual at the same time personal development. To this concern they stress that one of the important personal change they

observed is increased appreciation and life they have what they have had taken for granted before the journey. They also explain that this change was predominantly caused by interacting with local community and to see how they appreciate even little in their life. Some of them also describe this experience as life changing and stress that their world view and perspective about life change. They especially emphasized transformation of self-centered self towards other-centered self. They felt that they become more concern about other people.

3. *Decreased concern with materialism*

Which also incorporate that person is less affected by carrying about concern of other people towards him. So he is not anymore interested to impress others. As it was previously examined in the case of Kannings' (2013) study about international backpacking, when through self-awareness people were able to recognize their own consumption and role of materialism in world what cases that they turned their lifestyle towards more alternative form of living, more simplistic and responsible.

4. *Spiritual changes*

Which are characterized by feeling of inner and personal connection with God, person see himself/or herself better as spiritual as religious, believe that the essence of all religions is united and connected and individuals are convinced that there is a life after death. This is related to Heintzman (2013) studies which prove that spiritual change is more likely to occur when individual is motivated towards it and seek for activities and places as sacred shrines where he/she can meditate, connect with God or higher power and pray in order to strengthen his/her faith and believes. Person consciously seeking for experiences which would nourishing ones spirituality and result in personal transformation and self-actualization. Spiritual change is related to transcendental experiences when one goes beyond self through various spiritual or religious activities (Heintzman, 2013).

1.4 Role of the place towards tourists transformation

“Tourism is the activity of people temporarily away from their usual environment for a period not exceeding one year and for virtually any purpose of travel with a few exceptions such as commuting to work or seeking to escape from war or disasters” (UNWTO, 2007, in Smith,

2013, p. 221). This characteristic of tourism make it apparent that concept of travelling is closely related to the place which is fundamental for tourist experiences, yet Smith (2013) argues that there is still little attention paid to this topic in the tourism journals. He also stress that the meaning of place going beyond the geographic character and to this concern also Morgan (2010) argues that not only physical attributes of place (natural environment, destination qualities, architecture) influence tourist transformational experiences, but in this process also intangible character of place is important. He named it sense of the place or spirit of the place. Sense of the place related to social structures, relationships (Smith, 2013) and it represent the emotional significance of the place (Jepson and Sharpley, 2013) in relation to special feeling of connection to the place (Morgan, 2010).

However on one hand Morgan (2010, p.252) argued that transformational process is inner and intellectual journey and person doesn't need necessarily to be involved in physical movement. Yet on other hand Moran (2000) stress that place and experiences it offers can highly enhance and support process of transformation, as also apparent from examined cases in earlier chapters. To this concern Sheldrake (2000, p. 60) believes that, "place is a complex network of relationships, connections and continuities...of physical, social and cultural conditions that describe my actions, my responses, my awareness and that gives shape and content to the very life that is me."

Reinsinger (2013) argues that process of transformation is more likely to occur, when person is travelling to the places which are very contrasting to their home environment and allow them experience moments which widen their perspectives and change the mindset. Such a contrasting experiences can be caused by very different cultural and social habits, values and traditions, contrasting physical environment as landscape or architecture (Reinsinger, 2013). Reisinger (2013) also believes that there are some places and circumstances, which create higher possibility and are more powerful in process of transformation. She calls it places with particular transformational power as holy or sacred places and shrines, which can influence transformation. Especially such a places plays important role for spiritual tourists and pilgrims as seen previously that supportive places and environment influence individuals spiritual transformation.

Narayanan & Mcbeth, (2009, p.) believe that „travelling to the places with significance provide complex experiences where inner world (mind) connect with external place.“ In regard to this Morgan (2000) stress as most effective conditions in which transformation can take place are when person has very contrasting natural or cultural experiences.

Scholars argued (Lane,1998 and McDowell, 1999) that the nature and its physical landscape have undoubtedly effect on persons psyche (Narayanan & Macbeth, 2009). They emphasized that “some physical landscapes stimulate in human beings an inspiration or an awakening that may eventually lead to their completeness” (Singh, 2005, in Narayanan & Macbeth, 2009 p. 373). As such transformative powers are seen in the places which have certain sense of place and provide tourist with emotional as with physical challenges, which provoke awe and feelings beings small but at the same time feel part of whole universe (Smith, 2013). Lane (1998, p. 19) also believe that places which are challenging and extreme have an impact on humans spirituality. Is it not a surprise, that pilgrims are related to places which provide them with some kind of hardship but also some sort of isolation, which trigger their inner spirituality, what is often related to natural settings as in case of Santiago de Compostela or Desert Pilgrimage (Narayanan & Macbeth, 2009). To this concern Smith (2003) emphasizes Graburns’ (2002, p.105) argument that there are “certain landscapes, which may variously inspire awe, introspection, or wonder, reminding us of our place in the world and our relationship to space and time.”

To this regard Narayanan & Macbeth (2009) bring the study related to the role of place on the personal transformation and spiritual development of 4WD tourist. This study prove that original settings of nature (desert) on one hand challenging on other side peaceful and quiet, caused that person return transformed from his/her journey. 4WD tourists report that challenging situation they had to face made them realize their own limits what result in enhanced self-knowledge or self-awareness and better understanding and relation to nature. On other side to be away from their regular life of stress and rush, peaceful settings of desert allows them to rethink and purify themselves (Narayanan & Macbeth, 2009). Spiritual 4WD tourists stress that however this travel wasn’t about particular destination but it was rather about journey it offers.

Another studies also support beforehand mentioned believes as for instance Jepson & Sharpley (2013) stress that people seek for natural settings in believe that they will gain emotional refreshment and purify and reconnect with the true self (Seaton, 2013). Study proves that connection with nature and landscape result in emotional and spiritual fulfillment of humans. He stress that certain landscapes are in spiritual importance for people and are related to sacred and provide opportunity to connect with self and higher power (Jepson and Sharpley, 2013). Not only beauty of landscape is important but also silence and solitude what natural settings provide are essential for emotional and spiritual fulfillment. Nature provides the time and space for self-reflection and contemplation what enhance human emotional well-being Coble, Selin and Erickson (2003, in Jepson and Sharpley, 2013).

As already mentioned earlier, another important transformational factor related with travelling to another place is the experience of contrasting culture. Reinsinger (2013) stress, that travelling is closely related to the movement within foreign countries where tourists get in contact with different cultures. Wedon (1987) assumed that humans believes, values, thinking and behavior are influenced by socio-cultural factors (Reinsinger, 2013). Therefore when one leave the place of his home environment and face another culture it can have contrasting experience due to the differences what he or she is used to and this can result in the cultural shock what evoke feelings of stress or frustration (Reinsinger, 2013). Such a situation trigger process of transformation, trough which person adapt his attitudes and behaviors according to the new situation, what result in personal growth (Chaffee & Mcdevitt, 1997).

Grabowski (2013) also discuss this element of tourism as important in her studies and she relates it to acculturation. She explains acculturation as the ability of person to adapt to new culture which he or she experiences and she stress Berno and Wards (2007) argument that acculturation undoubtedly related to the experiences of tourists and it has an impact on humans psychological transformation (Grabowski, 2013). Kim (2001) also argued that such experience as cultural shock or language barrier to communicate with local communities, cause that person face some complication and difficulties, which as already mentioned require to go trough the process of transformation in order to adopt their behavior to the new situation accordingly.

However spiritual or as before named holistic tourism is predominantly oriented towards inner and inward oriented journey, Smith and Kelly (2006) stressed that yet this journey is taken in the particular landscape or place which represent outer world. Thus they highlight importance besides considering only the inner perspective of spiritual tourism also consider the relationship of the place (outer experience) in the relation to the inner experiences. She also emphasizes the fact that most of the retreats and activities oriented towards inner transformation are usually happening in the natural, peaceful and supportive settings (Smith and Kelly, 2006). And those intangible attributes (traditions, values, rituals, etc.) of the place give the place special transformative power, which are in strong benefit for transformation or personal growth (Altman & Low, 1992). To this regard, author believes that it is in benefit to broaden knowledge in spiritual and tourism studies when investigate role of the place in transformational process of youth spiritual tourists.

2 Data and Methodology

2.1 Research Question

As earlier provided studies show, contemporary youth are the generation which requires serious attention due to their potential to influence and reshape the world if their potential is developed properly. As one of the strongest influential opportunities to this regard comes from the leisure activities and experiences which provides international spiritually motivated travelling.

It is clear that different forms of travelling can't provide the same experience and though neither the same transformational outcomes. However, as the research on transformational potential of spiritual tourism is framed predominantly by studies of retreats (secular or religious) and pilgrimage and doesn't look at spiritual journey as a holistic experience, author finds it important to provide first understanding of transformational experiences from other forms of tourism in comparison to spiritual tourism, which she believes broaden the horizons of possible change and helps to understand significance of spiritual tourism. Yet, the thesis is focusing on contemporary youth and due to the lack of research of this particular generation in the studies of spiritual tourism and transformation tourism in general, it was not possible to

discuss the process of transformation directly apply on them. However, on other side this gives a space and opportunity for this research to respond this gap and let the results of empirical study speak for itself.

Additionally, however the concept of tourism is highly framed around the importance and role of the place in it, and especially “sense of place” plays one of the key roles in the process of transformation and predominantly in the case of spiritual journeys, there is lack of information related to it in the recent tourism studies. To this concern author aims to respond beforehand mentioned gaps with following Research Questions:

RQ1: How does spiritual tourism experiences can enhance transformation of youth and their life as a whole?

RQ2: What role does India plays as culturally spiritual place in the process of youth transformation?

In order to fulfil the aim of this thesis and answer earlier stated research questions, this chapter provides explanation and guideline through the whole research process.

2.2 India

In order to fully understand the research author believes that it is in benefit for reader to understand to the character of the destination where the research was conducted and therefore this chapter starts by introducing India, what one of the worldwide famous spiritual and religious destination will be describe.

As already mentioned earlier, spiritual tourist travel around the globe to cultural spiritual landscapes (Smith, 2013) in order to have an authentic spiritual experiences, and India is one of those spiritual and religious icons where one is heading to when thinking about authentic spiritual holiday (Aggarwal, Guglani & Goel, 2008). During authors stay in this country she heard many times phrases as “*India is as any other country*” or “*You can feel the holy in the air.*” While one is scrolling through the tourist guides about India, person can get first

impression and understanding that it is a country of millions of people, multiple cultures and traditions and ethnic communities which can leave in synchronicity in this incredible country. It is the land of numerous Gods and Dieties, Land of holy places, shrines, sacred mountains (Himalayas), ancient spiritual and religious practices and healing techniques.

Lonely Planet Guide (2015) promotes India as following: *“India tosses up the unexpected. This can be challenging, particularly for the first-time visitor: the poverty is confronting, Indian bureaucracy can be exasperating and the crush of humanity may turn the simplest task into a frazzling epic. Even veteran travellers find their nerves frayed at some point; yet this is all part of the India ride. With an ability to inspire, frustrate, thrill and confound all at once, adopting a 'go with the flow' attitude is wise if you wish to retain your sanity. Love it or hate it – and the most travellers see between the two embrace India's unpredictability is to embrace her soul”*

Tourism industry is one of the most important and most profitable industry of the country and India attract not only domestic but also increasing number of foreign tourists who are coming each year (Aggarwal, Guglani and Goel, 2008) what transforming this country to become most important global destination (Jesurajan and Prabhu, 2012). However, international tourists are insignificant in numbers when compare to domestic tourists, they usually stay in the destination longer than one month and generate high amount of foreign exchange (Agggrawal, Gulani and Goel, 2008). This country has a very long tradition of spiritual and religious tourism due to the fact that the pilgrimage is in the core of societal norms and life in India since history and 95% from all domestic tourists are reported as pilgrims and religious tourism (Singh, 2011). It is claimed that those traditions and also orientation domestic demand and increasing amount of foreign tourists who are interested in religious and spiritual traditions and activities, shape the tourism orientation towards this segment (Sharlpey & Sundaram, 2005).

Spiritual tourism is important form of tourism in India and among westerns this destination become very important thanks to the celebrities as Beatles and Rolling Stones, who experienced retreat and ashram stay and after returning were promoting lifestyle of peace and vegetarianism (Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005). Today is India considered as a spiritual icon worldwide and many foreigners from all over the world come to the country in hope find the

purpose and meaning of their life and maybe even obtain enlightenment. Due to the rich and old religious traditions (Hinduism, Muslims, Christianity, Sikkism, Buddhism and Janains, just to name most significant) country provides travelers with unlimited options for spiritual experiences.

Spiritual tourists aiming to different places and sites with different religious and spiritual significance as for instance hill stations (Himalayas) and places close to the Holly river Ganga are considered as places with strong spiritual power. Just to name few destinations Dharamsala which is close to the Tibetan boarder and highly influenced by Tibetan culture is the place where western can get in touch with Tibetan Buddhism philosophies and where various Buddhist retreats are offered or silence retreat called Vi Pasana (Sharlpey & Sundaram, 2005). Other place of such religious significance as for domestic tourist also for foreigners is Rishikesh. This hill station is known as “Capital of Yoga” and Hindu religion, where many pilgrims come every year. Especially westerns are attracted with ashram retreats, where one is following spiritual activities as yoga and meditation (Sharlpey & Sundaram, 2005).

India is the place where any kind of spiritual needs can be fulfilled trough the varieties of activities it offers from the pilgrim places, historical monuments of religious significance, places of worships, religious ceremonies, teachings of spiritual leaders and gurus or famous religious festivals as for example Kurbha Mela, which is the most famous Hindu spiritual festival which is taking place only each 12 years (Sharlpey & Sundaram, 2005). People from over the world come to India for yoga retreats and yoga teacher trainings, as it is the county of origin of yoga traditions and one can choose from unlimited amount of schools and teachers. Besides of yoga Indian culture is known for its ancient healing practices and therapies as Naturopathy and Ayuroveda which attract many westerns and those activities are also seek by spiritual tourists who take this holiday as more holistic journey (Sharlpey & Sundaram, 2005).

As author experienced there is unlimited amount of various spiritual activities offered, that one obtain very rich spiritual experience and she claims that it sometimes become even overwhelming and confusing to choose the right activity. There are plenty of fake gurus or spiritual teachers out there and one can get easily cheated and trapped in “kind of fake

spiritual dream.” All those activities are really easy accessible and for very low amount of money and tourists can really try anything what probably would be not possible while in other country which has no such strong spiritual traditions. What author observed is that almost anyone there can become spiritual teacher and also many westerns were providing different workshops, healing sessions or life coaching while on their spiritual journey. Therefore, there is space for the question, if and what experiences one had were really authentic and were really able pay its purpose?

2.3 What Research Paradigm is used

In order to reach earlier stated goal and purpose of the studies, author decided to apply interpretivist paradigm into the thesis. This paradigm was created as a criticism of traditional approach towards gaining knowledge trough positivist and scientific paradigm (Mack, 2010). Interpretivist paradigm is also named as anti-positivist or constructivist paradigm which is characteristic by meaning-making approach (Ernest, 1994). In the core of the interpretivist paradigm lies strong believe, that the research instead trying to obtain objective point of view from outside rather has to focus on subjective research which leads trough inner exploring of participants lived experiences (Mack, 2010). One of the philosophies which highly construct and influence interpretivist paradigm is phenomenology (Mack, 2010).

Phenomenology was created by Edmund Husserl, as a reaction to the traditional form of scientific researching, which solely focus to study only events which are measurable and observable (Powers & Knapp, 1995). However, by adopting phenomenological approach Husserl aimed to answer the gap in the studies, which ask to focusing and studying more abstract side of studied phenomena, and look at it trough perspective of individuals and their lived experiences (Powers & Knapp, 1995). Thus phenomenology provides more subjective view and deeper understanding of the nature of studied phenomena rather than generalized objective knowledge and creation of new concepts and theories (Moran, 2000 & Schmidt, 2005).

As already clarified in the core of phenomenological research is to understand experiences of studied participants and create meaning out of it. In regard to this fact Willson (2010) in her studies emphasizes Elias (1991) argument, that tourism and spirituality as experiences driven

phenomenon through which individuals create their own (subjective) set of meanings and beliefs. To this concern also Uriely (2005) stress that earlier studies focused on tourist experiences through restrictive studies derived from traditional scientific paradigm and he calls for less restrictive approach towards study of experiences (Willson, 2010). Experiences characterized by Willson (2010) are subjective, multidimensional and plays important role in the life of person. Also as stated previously experiences are playing significant role to influence tourists transformation. It is also argued that phenomenology is suitable approach when researcher is study sensitive topic (Moran, 2000) as in this case studies are related to spirituality, religion and transformational process, which is as stated earlier in the literature many times related with unpleasant feelings and tragic experiences. Considering all earlier mentioned author believes, that phenomenology is the most suitable approach to understand transformational experiences of youth spiritual tourists through their perception and life experiences.

2.4 Research design and approach

As apparent from the literature review, there is lack of information regarding to the transformational studies in tourism literature and especially considering youth experiences with spiritual tourism phenomenon. Thus considering this fact this study aiming to provide experiential outlook through lived experiences of youth spiritual tourists.

As naturally emerge from the character of phenomenological research, author uses inductive method (Mack, 2010) to obtain knowledge about studied phenomena of transformational potential of spiritual tourism in the life of youth in 21st century. Inductive approach can be also characterized or explained by the notion “bottom-up approach” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 23). In other words inductive approach allows researcher to create theory through creating themes by interpreting of data collected from studied participants. Researcher doesn't focus on prove or disprove already existing concepts about studied phenomenon, but rather let the theory appears naturally from collected data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.12). Thus the process of inductive studies allows space for unexpected results and themes. First data related to the studied phenomenon are collected, then findings are organized to the themes, which construct the theory (Creswell, 2005).

2.5 Research methods and instruments for data collection

In these studies as inductive approach is applied author uses qualitative methods as data collection. Scholars argued that qualitative methods are applicable and relevant in a case when researcher aims to provide and investigate human lived experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). He also argued, that in order to clarify ones experiences and get in depth information it is recommended to use qualitative methods over quantitative. He stress that “experience have vertical depth so to use quantitative method is not relevant because only surface information would be captured and studies of experiences aim to capture richness and fullness of experiences” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138).

2.5.1 Interview/Semi-structured interviews

However there are multiple instruments how qualitative data could be obtained as for example observation of participants, focus groups, interviews and etc. (Polkinghorne, 2005). It is argued that predominantly unstructured interviews are used, in a form of discussion which are flexible in the core (Polkinghorne, 2005). However he also stress that it is useful for researcher to have some guiding questions written, with the topics or some leading questions researcher knows that he want participants talking about and cover during the interview. Yet, it is still leaving space for interview to be flexible and more open towards changing direction and adapting to the needs of discussion and interview (Polkinghorne, 2005). Purpose of this thesis and derived from possibilities of qualitative approach to gather rich and deep data from smaller sample (Veal, 2006) author collected data trough semi-structured interviews. Bryman (2014) consider semi-structured interviews as more flexible form of gathering data, what allows researcher to follow conversation more freely compare to the structured interviews which create limitation for researcher. Thus for this studies author decided use semi-structured interviews to obtain necessary data, in more flexible manner trough both sided conversation and discussion among researcher and participant.

2.5.2 Conducting the Interview

Collection of data was conducted during the months of April until July 2015 in India as it is known as spiritual destination. This popularity among westerns mainly aroused when Beatles came to experience spiritual journey, and since that time interest of spiritual tourists grows

(Norman, 2013). Participants were questioned in northern part of India in states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, which offer lot of spiritual activities and many foreigners coming there to experience it.

Original goal was to understand experiences of western youth following the "spiritual path" through travelling in India. However, on author's surprise, there were more young people travelling from other than western countries as for example from South America and Israel, what made it more difficult to get access to westerns and also author believes that through including youth from different cultural background broaden and enriched the knowledge about studied phenomenon. This argument is related to the Reinsingers' (2013) advice, who ask researchers to focus more on different cultures, while until recent times most of the studies consider broader group of westerns. However, participants consider themselves as westerns even they are coming from countries as Brazil or Chile, mainly because of the fact that majority of them are long life travelers, who don't stay in their country of origin most of the time.

Before coming to India author conducted some research on places with spiritual importance and that's why she decided to conduct research in Haridwar and gather data in Ashrams. However Haridwar is considered as one of the holiest places in India, yet more visited by young foreign travelers are places as Rishikes, Dharamsala, Kerala and Goa. After familiarize herself with the situation right in the place and understand better circumstances while in the destination, author decided to reach participants through various spiritual programs, events and workshops in Rishikesh and Dharamsala, due to the accessibility of the data.

As emphasized by Creswell (2007), to obtain valid and deep data it is necessary to attain participants who would like to participate freely and who are eager to share their experience in honest and open manner. To be able do this researcher has to maintain relationship with participants which would allow them feel comfortable and trustful and thus it is essential to relate to them in the field (Tewksbury, 2009). To follow this advice, author attended different spiritual programs and retreats, through which participants were obtained by the personal contact and networking. After getting them know closely and learning if they are suitable to take part in the research each of them was asked to voluntarily participate. Also researcher is concern about the importance of face-to-face interviews and need for direct understanding

about environment and experiences, thus that is another reason why participate in programs was essential, which enables her to obtain eye-to-eye interviews easier. She also believes that interaction with participants while attending the same programs helps to build up trust and openness between researcher and interviewee.

Considering other advice of Creswell (2007) to interview individuals in the environment where they feel comfortable and unrestricted, each participant was offered option to choose the place where they would like to meet for interview. With Majority of them I met in the cafe or restaurant, which they advice by them in set up time. One participant asked to be interviewed by the river Ganga, where she would not feel distracted by noisy surrounding. In order to make them feel comfortable and don't put too much pressure on them, researcher made sure that she gave them space during the interviews and even, there was pre-set certain time frame for each interview in advance, she always gave participants space to talk more if they wanted to. Time frame was only informative for participants, but always flexible and anytime they wanted to change prescheduled meeting, as much as it was possible she adapt to the requirements of the participants.

To conduct the research was approved by EMTM and Ekonomska Fakulteta Ljubljana, Slovenia. Polkinghorne (2005) emphasized that it is necessary for researcher to clarify the aim of the research to the researched participant. Therefore, prior to the interview, participants were familiarized with the research and process of interview, and author asked them to sign the consent form. Author decided to provide contest form not only as it is required from the legal side, but also on behalf of Polkinghorne (2005) who stress that in order to enhance possibility that participants will provide personal and deep information, researcher need to provide assurance for them to feel safe. Most of the interviewees agreed to use their name in the report, but some participants allowed use only pseudonyms. Yet author decides to use pseudonyms to differentiate among participants, in order to protect participant's identity. Together with the consent form they were asked to fill in form with demographic information about their age, country of origin, professional status, income and religious believe.

Seidman (1991) argues that in order to obtain sufficient and deep knowledge about studied phenomena it is advised to engage with participants more than once. He stress that first

session should be for establishing trust while researcher is getting opening forays related to topic. This not only leads towards better trust between researcher and participant but also Seidman (1991) believes that individual would have time to reflect and during the next meeting would be able to provide more clear and detailed information during next interview, what would result in deeper and more complex knowledge. The third meeting with participant is advised to take part after data were transcribed and analyzed and when researcher found some unclear and incomplete answers, than he needs to clarify it with studied person through follow up questions (Seidman, 1991).

With each participant author arranged interview minimum twice during their stay in India and in the case that any additional clarification was needed, they were contacted via e-mail, skype or messenger. Doing the interview requires interaction with participants, what plays significant role. It is argued that how researcher interact with interviewee and how he conduct the interview (listen and respond) influence how person respond and thus also result of the research (Pokinghorn, 2005). After each interview while author listen the audio and retrospectively was thinking about her interaction with participants and try to improve her skills for next meeting. This process can be really challenging and sometimes if not managed well, it can create barriers between researcher and interviewee, if undesirable feelings are in place (Tewksbury, 2009). Researcher made sure, that in case interaction with participants was in very relaxed and friendly manner, and even if she disagreed with claims of participants, she supported their answers and question them in more details in order to support their confidence to speak out their own opinion, without feeling to be judged.

With this concern author organized initial meeting with each participant in order to create positive relation with them. Author agrees with Tewksburys (2009), comment and believe that it is especially important factor for studies about spirituality, where discussed topic is very personal. Author aimed to create some relation. Meeting was maintained in advance and in non-official atmosphere to familiarize with each individual and she learned if they were suitable she asked them to participate. In all cases they were really willing to participate and in one case interviewee was even the initiator who wanted to be heard after she learned about the research

Polkinghorne (2005) claims that in order to obtain sufficient data it is recommended to schedule interview minimum for 1 hour per one meeting. Following this advice interviewees were scheduled to take approximately 60-90 minutes, however sometimes discussion went so deep that it took longer. This helps author better see if any further data need to be obtained or clarified. If there was need for broader clarification, additional interview was arranged and in the case of only minor clarification, they were contacted via mail, skype and phone. In most of the cases it was really easy to reach them even on daily basis, because usually they stayed in the region for longer period and were participating in the same workshops and programs as researcher.

All interviews were made face to face, what author considered as the best option to discuss this personal topic as spirituality, and eye to eye contact allows author better observe reactions and body language or behaviour of participants to the questions. However some argued as Patton (1980) & Willson (2010) discussing personal issues is more comfortable for participants via phone where eye contact is no needed and they might feel more comfortable to discuss intimate topic such as. Anyway for this case author believes that the best option was face to face interview, considering the fact that all participants were on move and travelling for longer period of time and thus it would be difficult to reach them via skype or phone for longer discussion. Also, researcher didn't observe and feel any tension among her and participants while meeting in person. Moreover, opposite was the true, that most of the tourists in general who come for spiritual purpose, aim to talk to other and share their viewpoints and believes as they see it as a part of their personal growth.

Interview was conducted in English, however English was the first language only in the case of two participants from USA and UK, but the English level of all participants was quiet good and all of them could use it fluently. Gendlin (1962) stress that person can face difficulties and language barrier to when explain their experiences, when he or she uses metaphors in order to be able to provide explanation. To this concern author was aware of limitation regarding to the language barrier and even more in relation to deep topic as spirituality, that there were sometimes difficulties among participants to express deeper topics by using English words. However, in the case of confusion, researcher clarified meaning of used words. To overcome confusion researcher tried to clarify meaning of words which were not clear.

Majority of the participants are women and actually only one male participant was interviewed, which makes the group more homogenous, yet on other hand author is aware, that this can influence the validity of results. With majority of the participants was very easy to follow conversation and it was flowing very easily and relaxed mode and they were able to provide me with relevant and clear information, yet there were few cases when I felt that participants were keeping their distance and hesitating to provide very personal and deep experiences. Especially in one case, when author had first meeting with participant in non formal way, when researcher was trying to map if she is the right participant, person shared very personal and dramatic story. However, during the interview she didn't want to share this experience and author fully respect it. This I believe was caused either by some form of discomfort or by trying to change the topic. In another however I didn't have feeling that person would not feel comfortable to talk about any topic, yet studied participant was not able to organize his/her thoughts and express himself/herself accordingly to the question individual was asked. However author adapt and added additional questions in discussion with this participant in order to clarify his experiences. Sometimes I had even feeling that he tries to give a lecture than to answer the questions.

2.5.3 Design of the interview

Although, as earlier mentioned author decided to apply semi-structured interview, which gives more freedom and flexibility during the discussion with participants, it is in help for researcher to create guiding questions for interview, to give him support and direction during the interview (Polkinghorn, 2005). To this concern author created structured interview guideline, which was inspired and composed from different studies related to the topic as from the work of Norman (2012) and Willsons' (2010) studies, and questions were customized accordingly to the needs of this thesis. Especially, Willson (2010) follow phenomenological approach for question creation, where only two questions are necessary to be asked. One question about phenomenon researcher study and second follow up question to provide understanding what it is like? Therefore this strategy applied author to his interviews.

Interview guideline is divided into four main parts and the full sample is provided in Appendix 2. The first section of interview is directed towards clarification if the participant is really suitable for this research and if he or she fulfills minimum requirements for purpose of

this thesis. Therefore questions related to the motivations and intentions why they came were asked, what helps to understand also their background and life situation they are facing or were facing before coming to India. Second section, is closely related to the understanding of spiritual tourism and therefore questions about spirituality and religion were ask to make sure, participant and researcher are clear about used terms during the interview and this section also aim to understand their spiritual background. The third section is related to spiritual tourism experiences in India, which aim to provide deep insight and understanding of the phenomenon and the last part helps to understand what role does India as a culturally spiritual destination plays in their transformative experiences.

The process of interview guideline creation, was consulted with experts from research centre in DSVV University in Haridwar, who gave their advice and prove ability of questions to gather necessary information in order to answer earlier stated research questions.

In addition author believe, that leading guideline was in big benefit and help during the interview process, however as each participant was different and had different story to share, questions were adequately adopted to for better personal match, therefore in some cases some questions were added in order to clarify answers and in other cases if participants answered simultaneously more questions, while answering one, therefore some questions were not asked.

2.6 Sampling method/selection of respondents

2.6.1 Sampling frame/ purposive non-random sampling

As already mentioned earlier, author employed qualitative approach to this research and as advice for qualitative studies (Palys, 2008), the purposive non-random sampling was applied. This sampling frame is often used for qualitative research (Wilmot, 2005) and as applied by Teddlie & Yu (2007), it is essential in the cases when author don't aim to provide general knowledge for entire population. "Purposive techniques involve selecting certain units or cases, based on a specific purpose rather than randomly"(Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003a, p. 713). Considering the time limitations, this sample frame holds additional advantage, because it helps reach target participants and get knowledge faster (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The core of criterion sampling is not the number of studied participants, but in the centre of attention is

the characteristics of studied individuals which need to be reached. The main focus is on the population which has particular knowledge or experience with studied phenomenon, which helps to fulfill purpose of the study (Wilmot, 2005). In other words, only individuals who fulfill certain characteristics which author consider as essential can be included into the research.

2.6.2 Criterion based sampling

Also Creswell (2007) suggest, that for researcher to obtain most credible data it is advices to use either criterion based sample or critical case sampling. In this concern author applies criterion sampling and thus following sample was included in the research. In this research were included only individuals who had already experiences with spiritual travel in any country, while they have to be travelling in India for the spiritual purpose as well minimum for 3 months. In order to get necessary knowledge sample was limited only to youth foreigners travelling from outside of India.

Table 1: Participants information

Participant	Country	Age	Spiritual tourism experiences
A	Austria	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd time in India as spiritual tourist • Previous alike experiences (Central America)
B	Venezuela	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd time in India as spiritual tourist
C	United Kingdom	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd time in India as spiritual tourist • Previous alike experiences (Africa)
D	United States	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st time in India as spiritual tourist • Previous alike experiences (USA)
E	Brazil	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st time in India as spiritual tourist • Previous alike experiences (Thailand)
F	Chille	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st time in India as spiritual tourist • Previous alike experiences (Africa)
G	Israel	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st time in India (multiple entry) • Previous alike experiences (Thailand)

Additional requirement was to include only youth travelers who were between ages of 18-35 as previously defined in theoretical part as age framework for youth in this thesis. In order to provide diverse and rich data, participants with different spiritual experiences (different spiritual workshops, events, programs) were asked to participate who could contribute by various experiences. Individuals who participated in the research attended spiritual programs as Vi passana Meditation Retreat, Yoga and Meditation Retreats, Buddhist Courses, Pilgrimage festivals and various spiritual workshops just to name few and you find closer characteristics in appendices. Author gave preference also variety of participants thus they are representative of different countries. To this concern participants represent sample from different countries and continents as: Austria, USA, Israel, Venezuela, Brazil, UK, Chile. However second research question is closely related to the case of India, first research question includes overall knowledge in order to find out how spiritual tourism experiences can transform life of youth as a whole. To experiences from various spiritual tourism experiences were included, considering the fact that beside of the one participant all of them had previous experiences with spiritual tourism in other countries.

Phenomenological methods and various studies which used phenomenology as an approach for their studies, recommend to interview lower number of participants and Giorgy (2009) set up the limited number of 3 participants. However this number could be difficult to handle and scholars advice is to include from 6 to 11 participants in order to be able to find deeper and personal meaning for each of them (Moran, 2000; Schmidt, 2005; Jennings, 2001 & Willis, 2001). This argument is also emphasized by Giorgi (2009) and Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) who look upon the work of important figures in psychological research who used in their studies limited number of participants, in order to be able to get deeper and generalized knowledge of studied phenomena. However it can be also argued and it is believed by some scholars Saunders (2012) who advised to include 12-30 participants in a case of heterogeneous group, that larger number of studied subjects is better for generalized results for broader population. But Englander (2012) on other hand emphasized that this would result in greater work for researcher and broader variation in results, however it would little contribute to generality of results.

Thus considering the following advices and the time restriction which was available for research in the field it was decided to interview 8 participants. However, only 7 participants

will be used for this thesis, because one participant withdrawn from the research after first meeting, due to personal reasons and unexpected departure. Author tried to contact her via e-mail she provided, but there was no way to reach her. In the research were participating six female representatives and one male representative. All of the participants represented different countries and experienced variety of spiritual activities. Polkinghorne (2005) stress that for qualitative research and to conduct interview, the main role doesn't play how much voices were heard, or how many data were collected. Rather researcher has to focus if he or she has clear, sufficiently deep and understandable data. To this concern, however number of participants was planned before starting research in field, however author decided final number interviewed subjects after she was sure that the necessary knowledge was gained. Followed the statement of Kvale (1994, p. 165) "Interview as many subjects that you find out what you need to know."

2.7 Method of data analysis

It is argued that data which are collected from the interview are the base and evidence for research and researchers role is to make sense of heard stories and produce relevant meaning from it (Polkinghorne, 2005). To this regard author uses thematic analysis for this thesis, as Aronson (1995) stress that in order to make clear sense for reader, it is essential to identify and organize data into the themes according to commonalities in patterns in lived experiences of studied individuals. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain 6 phases process towards creating themes and meaning from the collected data, which author follows while going through the process of data analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that as a first step researcher has to do after collecting data is to get familiar with it. However in order to make the process of familiarization and analysis Polkinghorne (2005) stress, that if the data were collected through the interview, it is in benefit for researcher to transform "said words" into the "written words." Thus the beginning of the process, each interview was audio recorded and transcribed within few days. As a next step author read through the transcribed text several times, what allows her to get familiar with the data and also help to recognize if there was any missing information or confusion which requires further clarification. Those initial readings help the researcher to get an overall feeling and sense of the discussion she had with participants. First time reading was predominantly to get the sense of discussed context, but following readings were in more

active way, when author was searching for meanings and patterns which occurred in the text. During this process she made a notes and her own understanding of the context she read.

In another step after getting familiar with the text as Braun and Clarke (2006) noted is the process of coding itself. In this phase author decided to do coding manually. This process of coding wasn't just one phase process but it was repeating until she made sure all necessary information are covered and coded. In the process of coding author didn't focus on repeating words but predominantly on the ideas and meanings of text which were then linked together and labelled. Through this process coded information were compared and linked to each other and author wrote text where she identify and characterized coded meanings.

The following steps according to Braun and Clarke (2006) scheme is to combine and put the coded information and meanings into the themes. Thus author first put various codes into the broader themes. Through this process author found it very helpful to use visual categorization, trough writing codes on the paper with explanation of the context and then she was trying to organize it accordingly into the relevant themes. After the initial organization of themes she went through the process again and author revise and reorganized themes until themes fit together and which provide clear and broad information as following Braun and Clarke (2006) advice.

In the last two phases author first named and renamed themes. She defines what the each theme is about and what set of information and data it covers. Author also constantly compare each theme together to make sure that they are not overlapping and telling the same story. Within each theme than she wrote the story what is telling. In the final step when the story about each theme was explained and clear boundaries between each theme were drawn author produce the report. In this concern she put beforehand created and described themes into the meaningful and coherent story which provide clear information to the reader in the relation to beforehand stated research questions.

2.8 Trustworthiness in qualitative research

Especially in the quantitative studies factors of validity and reliability are questioned. However it become difficult to capture it in qualitative studies and in this order to support

quality in qualitative studies Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that it is necessary that study fulfil 4 main criteria of trustworthiness in qualitative research what they created: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility

Shenton (2004) relate credibility to the validity factor in quantitative studies. This criterion is intended is to investigate how findings are really matching to the reality. Shenton (2004) stress that one of the important step towards credibility is to inform participant about his right during the research as for instance that he or she can withdrawn from the research without giving the reason or to ensure him or her that information collected during the interview will not be used for any other purpose as for the thesis and etc. He argued that this act should be done in order to make participant feel comfortable and in that manner he or she would be able to provide necessary and truthful information. She called “tactic helps to ensure honesty in informants” (Shenton, 2004. p. 66). Also as earlier mentioned author created friendly atmosphere and bonds with participants’ trough attending same programs and activities. In this concern author at the beginning of the interview process inform participant about the goal of the studies and about their right in the process and each participant had to sign content form where they agreed with conditions. This form also provides proof that all participant who were interviewed participated voluntarily and freely. Another factor what Shenton (2004) highlights, is to discuss process with someone relevant and skilled in field of research. In this concern author consult structure and questions of interview and getting guidance from the research department in DSVV University in India. Another factor which contributes to the credibility in qualitative studies is “members check” (Shenton, 2004, p. 68). Thus author always clarified with interviewee any unclarity during the research and transcribed report were approved by participants in order to make sure that researcher understood what was really meant by person.

Transferability

It is argued that compare to the quantitative studies validity in qualitative studies doesn’t respond to ability being applicable on the wider society (Shenton, 2004). Therefore Shenton (2004) believes that only way how researcher conducting qualitative studies can relate to this requirement its trough providing reader with thick and detailed description of studied phenomenon. As already mentioned before, as this study focus to investigate experiences of

tourist in depth and include only small sample size. Therefore it is not able to provide generalized knowledge, author answer requirement of transferability through providing rich, detailed contextual and description. Which are not able to provide generally applicable knowledge, but can provide information and relate to own position of reader and serve for further research and deepening the knowledge.

Dependability

In this context to fulfil requirement of dependability described by Shenton (2004) author provide detailed description of research methods and details how research was conducted. Such a detailed description is provided to the reader in order to offer sufficient information to provide reader with opportunity to repeat the research in the same phase if necessary. Through detailed description author allows reader to understand the process of studies.

Confirmability

Shenton (2004) emphasized that Patton believes that to obtain real objectivity in the research it's impossible even in a case of quantitative research. She argues that real objectivity could be obtained if human factor would not be included, what is not possible in the research and in this regard it is obvious that objectivity is related to researcher and participant biases. Author is aware, that her own set of beliefs can influence direction of the results and to this regard she makes sure and try to depersonalize as much as possible. To this regard diminish the bias on researcher side, she admits that in her interest is not to provide her own beliefs in this research. Author is trying to provide as truthfully and as objectively the story of the participants, and her voice will be heard only in the part of discussion.

3 Analysis

As already explained in the previous chapter of methodology, the goal of the analysis was to find common themes what participants were discussing during the interview. In this chapter author aims to answer research questions by presenting obtained findings. Therefore this section is divided into two main sections while in first part information are related to answer how spiritual experiences contribute to the transformation of youth while second part is related to the role of place in this process. Findings are organized under the main themes and each theme describes various sub themes as can be seen in the table 2.

Author present only themes which were mainly discussed by majority of the participants, and however there were undoubtedly other themes which occurred, yet those were only discussed by one or two participants, and therefore those are not included in this report. Only themes which were reported by minimum 5 participants are only included, but most of the themes were actually discussed by all the participants.

However some participants agreed to use their name for this research, there were also some of them who agreed to use only pseudonym. To this concern author decided to use codes as for example participant A or B, in order to secure anonymity of participants as this topic is very personal and sensitive.

3.1 How does spiritual tourism experiences can enhance transformation of youth and their life as whole?

In this chapter reader finds results from the research which shows transformational outcomes of spiritual tourism, which are organized in the table into the 4 themes and each includes few sub-themes. Furthermore themes are more in detail described and explained.

Table 2. Spiritual tourism experiences and transformation

Themes	Sub Themes/ Codes
Spiritual growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual awakening • Presence of the personal faith • Foundation of God
Personal development towards self-actualization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come back to yourself • Look into yourself and feel the pain • Self-awareness for better relationships
Resolving and understand past conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the life in a new light • Loving myself the way I am • Understanding of the parents
New values, new behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness is inside me, I don't need to buy it (spiritualism vs. materialism) • World need my help and contribution

3.1.1 Spiritual growth

From the findings related to spiritual growth rise three subthemes: Spiritual awakening or I see higher purpose in my life, I'm not religious, but I have my personal faith and I found the God.

Spiritual awakening

As most of the participants A, B, E, F and C claim the main intention which was pulling them towards spiritual tourism and experiences it provides was a search for something deeper and profound in their life. All of them argued that it was kind of intention and inner call to go for spiritual journey. For instance participant E argues, *I wanted to get more wisdom. You know I always had a faith that there is something more and I'm seeking for deeper understanding of life.* While also participants F and C added, that their main goal was to go deeper in the inner practices and search for new knowledge profound in the life.

Participant C said: *I was searching for something I didn't know what it was and actually I found more than that.* She shared story, how in her life she heard or read many times something in a sense that *everything in our life happens for a reason, or everything has a meaning*, but she couldn't really relate to it, until she deeply experienced connection with something meaningful what goes beyond she knew. To this concern also participants A and F claim that during their spiritual journey they really understand how important it is to have both intellectual and experiential understanding in order to deeply understand and believe. Also interviewee A added *I get really closer to my spiritual path and I started to realize what spiritual books were talking about, I started to realize the true. Yes, this travel made a big difference and gave me experiences what I just read before and had only theoretical experiences with. Now I really try to live it.*

Also other participants as for instance F, G and E talks how spiritual experiences they had started to open different doors for them while they gain new perspectives and understanding of this world. B and F call such moments *spiritual awakening* or as Lidia named it *enlightenment moments*. Participant B also said *the most memorable moments was my spiritual awakening, when I started to remember and understand things.* To which also F added, that she remember exactly and clearly the moment when the process started.

What all participants mentioned was the connection they felt from inside with as F calls *universal wholeness*. For instance participant A claims that during Ayahuasca ceremony everything become so clear and she become aware of everything. It was a big lesson for me. *There is no duality and we are all connected.* F also shared her story. *I always believed that there have to be something else, deeper in life and I finally experienced it. It was like a retreat, because I was pushed to be with myself and there were no inputs or distractions. I had very mystical experience, I didn't understand in words, I just felt it and realized life is perfect, that there is something deeper in this life.*

Presence of personal faith

B, F and E talks, how their believe in traditional Christian religion was lost and they didn't have faith in religion anymore, even they had strong religious background. B said that she

really started to doubt religion and all she was said as a child. *I was disgusted with religion and I stopped practicing and when I came to India I understood religion in very different way because what I was told was totally wrong. I was told I have to pray to someone to forgive my sins. Also I have seen it somehow hippocratic because they say something and do something else. But now I see religion as something totally different like I feel really religious person, but is something so different is more inside me. It is connection from inside me to this wholeness. It is much deeper and make lot of sense to me.* She claims that to be in touch with Buddhism religion and experiencing life in Ashram were essential to recover her lost faith as she said *it broaden my horizons and opens different door for me.*

Similar experiences had participant F who talks how different religious teachings and philosophies and different interpretations she learned in India helped her realized that it is not a God she doesn't believe in but what she was educated in under the religious concept. *I felt that many things in the church doesn't make sense. And here trough the root of Hinduism I found new interpretation of Christ message. I just realized that all the religions come from the same source and same heart and same feelings.* She talks about the most powerful experience she had in the ashram, where she found meting point between Upanishads (oldest religious teachings) and Jesus message. *All my life I was separated from my own religion and saw bad things about it and here I realized that nice message of Jesus, who said that everything is inside. I always somehow felt it and I experienced it in Africa, but I didn't understand it in words and here it was explained by Christ words. I felt that I found what I was always looking for. I was crying because I understood I don't have to search anymore because all is inside and that is what all religions and spiritual masters try to tell us.*

Others also share similar believe as for instance B and D believe that people misunderstood the message of spiritual masters (as for example Jesus) and human kinds is responsible of whatever the religion stands for. To this concern D also talks how to see people take the religion in very personal way some in very extreme ways, made her realize that people individually apply religion to their own believe system. C also realized while meeting people with different religious believes that we are all same and on the same search no matter what we believe in. D said *India was eye opener for me and I realized my own personal way of believing and own faith. I don't follow or worship blindly someone, just because everyone is doing it, but now it is more connected and more personal path to me.* She also realized that it

is helpful to have faith and rituals in her life as it is helpful to get through the time of hardship and go deeper into spiritual path.

Other participants as for instance A, D and C were also searching for true by following different philosophies and various spiritual practices as yoga, meditation, Reiki or Bach flowers, what also brought them to India. As D said, *I guess we westerns are more fitting what works for us and I guess what we have been exposed to as for me is yoga, which put me into kind of saint moments and giving me religious outlets*. F to this concern claims that for him everything started to make more sense and he really started to believe that this life has a purpose while attending one month yoga retreat and teachings they were giving. He said: *it was life changing experience for me, because they explained it so well, everything about universe, karma, soul, meaning of life that it all suddenly started to make sense. Also astrology was wow, different view and eye opener how it is all connected*.

Foundation of God

All of the participants claim that after going through strong spiritual experiences they started to believe in God, higher power, universe or energy as D said *no matter what is the name*. For instance G calls his experiences in yoga retreat as life changing. *You know I came there as atheist and left as believer*. A also talks that she was atheist and lately she started to believe in energies, but being in India and seeing so many people believing in God and having deep experiences beyond self, made her definitely believe in God.

However participants refers to God differently as they were told under traditional religion, and E, B, A, F and C say God is not somewhere outside up there as F called him *grandfather*, but it is much deeper and God is inside of you. B believes that *God is inside and we are part of God. Inside you is a piece of God so you are the God*. Participant F talks how she had strong experiences before with God or cosmos and in India she was able to understand it with mind. She really understands now and said that God is here. *We can become God when we connect to true self. You know real self come from God and you are God inside all*. To this concern also G talks *I experienced it, I was connected to God. Because you know what is God? It is in you it is your awareness*.

E stress that for her to be able to connect with her inner God it is necessary to see God in human being. I need guru to believe, because I see God in Amma. *I saw pure love in human body. I see her and I see unconditional love and I feel the energy of God. It was a life changing moment to receive mantra from her. You know she will help you take your energy higher, towards spiritual growth to go beyond. It is deep commitment because this energy stays with you and in next life will help you as well.* Others as participant B or A describe such experiences with Guru as incredible experiences what was hard to describe for them. As B describe her experience with Dalai Lama: *When you are close to him you can really feel he is out of this world* to what A added that *when Amma hugged me it was changing my vibration for sure.* On other hand D stress, that she is still very careful with all that New Age spirituality and doesn't follow blindly some gurus of philosophies but rather get inspired by their actions and teachings. She stresses that meeting people on spiritual search and connects to them and discusses and sees different perspectives was an eye opener for her. I started to believe only recently in universe and all those things which goes beyond. *I'm more open to it.* E also started to understand more life beyond what we see with our physical eyes as she talks that now *I believe we have higher spiritual purpose and I believe more in magic.*

3.1.2 Personal development towards self actualization.

This theme is divided into three sub themes: Come back to true self, Look into yourself and feel the pain and Self-awareness for better relationships, which will be described in this part.

Come back to yourself

G talks how before decided to go for spiritual journey, he had perfect life, but he still felt he is missing something as he said *I felt really lost. Nothing made sense and finally I found what I was looking for. Before I used to forgetting myself, party and drinking, but now I rather looking for myself.*

A through the strong spiritual experiences realized, that she is not really true to herself and need to trust more to herself, to what E added: *before I lived in some lies.* But travelling with spiritual purpose while searching for the true and real self helped them realize more and more what is true to them and what they really want in their life, rather than blindly follow what others expect from them and what they believe would be better to do just in order to follow the norms.

Participants believe that the society is responsible for their disconnection from true self and which have great influence on persons believes. For instance D stress that we rise in environment where we have to be something or someone and to this concern Jenny talks that who person become and what are his or her believes is the result of surroundings where individual is rise. F also said *society doesn't encourage you to follow your truth and see who you are, they don't encourage you to accept your emotions, respect each other, grow and find the truth. No, they say you will be happy when you follow lifestyle they tell you.*

All of the participants refers that they were able to discover and connect to true self during their spiritual journey. B said *I feel I finally found myself. I become more balanced I do what I really think and what I feel.* Also F and G now feel more integral and more connected to true self and their purpose of life. As F claims: *I understood that I don't have to become someone or better person, because I already am.* This has to do with teachings of spiritual teachers and various spiritual experiences which allow them to go deeper towards inner self. As all of them argued, the main intention was to experience spiritual activities which would allow them to get deeper understanding and allow them to connect and work on personal growth.

F claims it was all continuous process and all activities and experiences were connected which helped her on the way towards true self. *I really wanted to experience and connect to myself. This trip gave me time for myself and opportunity to be with myself what I usually don't have in my daily life. Before coming here I didn't have time for myself, I was working too much. Here I have space and time to do what I really want to do.* Also E added *I started to follow what comes from the center of my heart, what I want to live, what I want to experience and what I want to bring.* While A argued that connection with guru and their teachings help her to connect with the *inner guru* and they she able to obtain more strength and trust in herself, which as E believes are necessary for her if she wants to follow life which is true to her.

Participants F, G, A and E through self-realization are aware of their own priorities and expectations in the life, and even they have to face various difficulties resulted from their

decision to go against certain commitments they are willing to follow it. They claimed that they feel more courageous to fulfill their dreams and less influential by outer circumstances.

To this concern A shares her story, when she return first time back home from spiritual journey, and she decided to follow her inner voice and quit her studies. *It was difficult time, my family didn't agree and we had many problems, but now they can understand better.* Also other participants as for example E, G and B after realizing and knowing themselves better started to trust more themselves and started to follow their own personal path what they believed was good for them *not what others would expect* from them. All three of them quit their job and started to do what they believe is more fulfilling and true to them.

Look into yourself and feel the pain

Process of self-realization or understanding is described by participants as very deep experience which as E and B expressed as *looking back on your life* and Tal stress how one have to really sucks into himself/herself in order to be able see the true. He explained how psychologically many things come out. *I had flashback when things came back about situations what happened. All was connected and I could clearly understand things which were before unclear.*

E and B were talking about activities as deep meditations and spiritual teachers speeches which they experienced during the journey, as an opportunity to look back. B claims that it was *very painful process, to face again to not nice memories and suppressed feelings I didn't want to deal before, that 's why I forgot it.* E also added that deep speeches of spiritual masters made her really feel and cry. *You start to see your wounds you don't want to see by yourself as is shame, guilt and ego. All the masks started to falling down. You want to be perfect than you realize how jealous you can be, you want to be the best and you realize how competitive you are.* Participant D talks how India helped her to realize her dark sides, *as my frustration when I was pushed to my limits I saw myself in a way I didn't know myself. Being nasty to people who didn't deserve that I was behaving like that with them.*

All the participants describe such experiences and process as very painful and uncomfortable. As Lidia stress it is not like having fun to what Tal added *you really come to work and sucks*

into yourself. To this concern E and G after intense experiences of self-reflection and process of seeing themselves talks that they had to leave to quiet place for a while to relax and take their time to process all information, sleep and recover, after intense experiences. Tal: *I went to Sri Lanka to take a break not for soul, not for self-enquiry, no working on self but it was for fun.* Other participants B, C and E claim that only when one become aware and start to face such uncomfortable emotions, only than one can really heal. B also added: *life changing situations are those which are usually painful and which shakes you inside.* To this concern participant through realizing their “dark sides” were able to understand and deal with the problems and issues in their life.

Self awareness for better relationships

All the participants emphasized that due to spiritual experiences which caused that they become more aware about themselves and helped them realize their own responsibilities and provide them with higher awareness about their actions, resulted in increased and betterment of relationships with others. B talks that before *I was always putting into the responsibility on other people, if I was sad or if I was angry or if I was whatever, it was always a cause of someone else who did something to me. And now it is totally different like that everything happens to me or around me is my decision and my responsibility. I don 't feel as victim anymore and that allows me to have healthier relationships with everybody around me.*

Participant E also feels that she become less emotional and doesn't behave hysterically as she used to, what influences her relationships when she fight less with others now. Other case explained G who said that for him long lasting relationship with opposite sex didn't make sense and didn't see meaning in it, while after understanding himself better he understood relationships in different way and he perceive it as a spiritual practice, trough which he can grow and develop.

D shared her experience from ashram retreat. *You know India push me to the level seeing myself in such a ugly way to people who really do not deserve to be talked like that just because I was taking all of my frustration all of that situation out on those moments that just pushed me to my limits when I was ready to break. During the spiritual retreat I realized that I really wanted to release those feelings of anger and judgment that I had and I realized that I*

*had it forever, what caused problems in my life and it made me behave nasty. During the retreat she tried to release those feelings and she realized that after returning back from the retreat she could adapt different approach towards others and she said *people will be who they are and if I need to deal with them I deal with them the best way possible and in kinder manner.**

G also added that *after knowing me better and understanding myself I can better control and manage my behavior and reactions. I can realize easier now when I'm getting angry and take steps and tools I have learned towards it.* D also stress that it was a profound moment when she found a tools which works for her, she believes *we all need tools which will help us trough the emotional barricades.* Once you start to understand bigger picture behind your problems, you can change, as B talks once she realized that her suppressed feelings which caused her depression were causing her problems in her life and in relationships to others. Also E added to this argument her believe, that *until realize yourself and see the bigger picture, you tend to blame others and you feel victimize.* Participants G, E, A and D claim that as a result of accepting and loving themselves their relationships with others also become better.

3.1.3 Today I resolve and understand the past conflicts

In this part reader finds three sub-themes which author present in more details. See the life in a new light, Loving myself the way I am and I understand my parents

See the life in a new light

Some participants claim that however nothing in their life radically changed, but life become better now and they feel much happier, just because of the change in their attitude towards things and life situations. As for instance F said *my life didn't change from outside, and it actually didn't have to change, because to be spiritual its inside and what matters is your attitude towards things. Yes that is the most important change in me, my attitude towards things!* E even stress that *however it seems the situations become tougher, I can deal with it better now,* because as G, F and D added they are much better in accepting situations and people and let things go, as they don't feel to control everything as before. This automatically results as C said in *being less emotional.*

Participants talk how spiritual experiences helped them to find answers to the most profound questions about the life and find deeper purpose of this life. As for instance Cristina shared her story. *Before coming here I had suffered from deep depression and I started to search for meaning of this life. I started to think this can't be life, you know that there have to be something else. This can't be it. But during my journey I started to have answers to my questions about life. You know I had very strong experience during meditation when I started to remember things from my mums' womb, when I started to realize and understand how life works and how is all connected and influenced*

Participants also talk how through increased awareness about the importance and purpose of life, they become more grateful. Participant F said: *I'm more conscious about the gift to be alive, I feel much grateful for life and each moment I live, either it is good or bad. I believe all is happening for bigger purpose. I feel more matured because I have more positive outlook about the life.* Others as G, B and E claims that changed attitude toward life resulted automatically that they feel more peaceful and happier. D also added how she feels gifted to have this opportunity to be here and feel that is her responsibility to share the knowledge she obtained here with other people.

Such experiences as majority participants claims resulted in different perspectives towards life and understanding that everything in life is connected and has a meaning either good or bad it has always deeper meaning. For instance C claims *everything what happens to me have a meaning now, I try to see bigger picture and I understand that it happens for bigger purpose.* B also said *it is incredible I understood in India many things of my life that were very painful and maybe not nice I understood why it happened and I started to see all these things that we see as bad so differently. Even if that what happened to you its really bad is for a good reason. And then after few months, years or whatever time is necessary then you realize why it happened.*

Loving myself the way I am

Besides positive attitude towards the life, one of the most discussed was positive attitude towards self as G and C call it *self-acceptance*, or as F and E call it *self-love*. To this concern B shared her story. *I was not happy with myself, I didn't accept myself, I didn't know myself, I*

didn't love myself. I couldn't understand because I didn't know myself. But as this journey helped her understand self she claims I was able to solve my lifelong problem with depression.

E or G believe that spiritual travelling and especially when alone allows them become familiar with himself/herself and feeling comfortable and happy. This is related to argument of F and B who said that *we are not used to be with ourselves alone and we feel uncomfortable and when one attending retreats he or she is pushed to be with themselves what can be very frustrating at the beginning because we were never used to be alone but very rewarding for deeper understanding which leads to greater happiness.*

Participant B stress that after spiritual experiences she changed her approach towards herself *and this change everything when I upset myself, I love myself as I am* as well. G, D and A also talks that they become more easy going and tolerant toward themselves and try to accept themselves as they are, what also results in better relationship with others. F talks *I gave more space to myself* what as others G, D and E claim results in better relationships with others. G said: *I'm better to be around, because when you love and accept yourself, you love more others and you are kinder towards others.*

Understanding of the parents

E describe how especially the role of parents is important in this process of self-development and she claims: *parents in believe they want the best for you, push you to follow their believes and it disconnect you from your real self. You want to fulfill their expectations but when you don't follow it, because you do something else what is more true to yourself, you feel you did something wrong and you feel guilty.*

Participants B, G, E and A stress that relationship with parents is essential and trough healing relationships with parents one can solve other problems and relationships as well. For instance B believes that until one don't solve relationship with parents can't be really free and happy. *It is the starting point!* She talks *until you don't accept them and you don't forgive them, because there is something you have to forgive to your parents and you are not comfortable with your parents, you are not able to grow. And that is the main thing.*

G shared his story: *I had lot of anger with my mother. I didn't understand and I blamed her and couldn't forgive certain issues I was holding since childhood. It was very strong emotionally when I realized that there was no reason to be angry. I started to cry.* He claims, that through looking back and reflecting upon old trauma helped him to see bigger picture and understand and finally heal it. B also experienced that after first spiritual journey her relationship with mother become better, due to being able to see the situation in a new light, what C relate to increased awareness and consciousness what she gained during spiritual journey. *We couldn't communicate for a long time and then I started to realize many things and I was very angry at her, couldn't forgive her until I have been doing through a lot. And it is the same with my father. It helped me realize that everything they did for me good or bad they did for love. They did it the way they knew and they did their best what they could. I finally feel comfortable with them and I love them and I forgive them and it feels good.*

Some participants also talk how they were able to handle challenging situation with parents differently after returning back home. A talks how the fact that she started to follow her true self and she decided to quit the school, her family didn't want to accept her decision and didn't agree with lifestyle she started to live which is very different to their lifestyle. They force her to follow their believes about good lifestyle. She claims that experiences she had during her stay in India through deep meditations help her to develop relationship of unconditional love towards parents what really helped her in such situation. *I really made me understand why and how relating thinking in certain way and this makes it easier to understand. I understand that all the forcing they did was because they wanted the best for me. I know they did it totally out of love and they just want to be sure that I'm ok, that I can live safe lifestyle. It is just their way of carrying.* Also G and B added that now they understand that it is the way parents show they care about them, even though it might not be the right way. A also claims *I realized that relation of parents is always unconditional love. They always love child no matter what.*

3.1.4 New values, new behavior

In the following lines reader finds following sub –themes: Happiness is inside me, I don't need to buy it and World needs my help and contribution

Happiness is inside me, I don't need to buy it (spiritualism vs. materialism)

One of the transformational result what spiritual journey contribute to is the changed believe or perception that all they need to be happy is inside and not outside. E talks how she realized and understand now that it is just habit and pattern what we have been said that only when we have all things than we can be happy. She claims *I still feel that many times, that I need house to be happy, stable relationship or lot of success to be finally happy, but now I understand that yes I can have it, but also I can be happy now without having it, because happiness it is not about having*. A shared her story, that after returning back from her first travel in India, she realized in many situations that we live in society which is always thirsty and people can't be satisfied with what they have, because we don't understand that source of happiness is within ourselves, but we try to purchase it from outside. B says *it is simple, we don't need to have much, because all we want is happiness*.

Participants A, D, F and E claim that they always somehow understood that everyone can be happy and as seeing people in India living in hard conditions made them realize that even bagger can be happy, they truly understood after they experienced it themselves. For instance F shared her story from silence retreat, which helps her to realize that real sense of life is inside and we can be truly happy only when we look there and not search outside. *I just realized I don't need much, because all is inside. Before I believed that it is all inside, but now I really experienced it on my own. I had to be with myself, I didn't need to communicate, I had nothing and I just experienced happiness because I was in present moment. Just was with myself and happiness came and I realized that everything is in you. Everyone who suffer can be happy, because it is not about how many things you have because I saw many people with lot of money who suffer and poor people who are happy. I realized we don't need nothing and we can be happy, because it is all inside*.

Other factor as participants F, G, C, B and A stress played important role in this realization, was experience and live in poor, difficult and simple conditions, what they experienced while travelling and attending various retreats, spiritual festivals or living in ashrams. For instance A talks about her experience in Kumbh mela pilgrimage festival, which helped her realize that she doesn't need much material goods and luxury things to be happy. *You know we just slept on the floor, it was crazy in the dirty ground next to garbage, next to anything you can*

imagine how Indians floor looks like. But next day some Baba called us to his tent if we want to sleep there. It was like basically piece of plastic next to the stone wall, but the floor was like the grassy really soft, so we stayed, we wanted to sleep there it was more soft. They were so humble and guest friendly and they really didn't want any money from us. That time I realized really you don't need that many material goods, don't need all that luxury things. If you have to live very basic and you know what are the real values in the life, than you don't need any of all our stuff, that we have like back home. We complain about so many things I want this I want that and it didn't make any sense anymore at the moment. It was really life changing moment for me.

Trough having such experiences themselves all participants claims that their values and priorities in life changed and therefore their perception about good life and satisfying life doesn't rely on obtaining material goods. A, E, G and B claim, that their lifestyle changed towards much simpler one. For instance B, G and E changed completely their lives and they decided to quit their job and started to live less money oriented life. G shared his story: *When I was home I had really good job, well paid, I had good salary, good life and I would say I was getting good grade for lifestyle I had but I was not happy. It was good lifestyle in the society therm. But here I realized that I don't need all that in order to be happy, because in fact I was not, because I realized it is all inside. And now I earn much less money, but I'm much happier and money is not my main motivation at all. I rather live with little but happy and peacefully. And peace is the most valuable for my life right now. You know actually I even don't call myself tourist anymore, because I consider this travelling as a way of live, It is my ultimate way of lifestyle.* To this argument also contribute F and D, who talks about their travelling as a part of their lifestyle not as a separate activity as a holiday.

B said *I felt so empty before even I thought I had it all, but not now and I changed my lifestyle for simpler one. I really live simple now, my friends and family can't understand.* She claims that she quit her good carrier and sold out her apartment and car and started to live simpler lifestyle also talks how she completely change everything in her life towards more self oriented and also how she treats her body. She said yoga helped me realize the connection between body, mind and soul and trough strong meditation experiences I had I understood how everything is connected and influenced. D also talks that she become more aware about

to take care of our body and keep it clean as she stress *body is our temple, so we have to treat it well.*

World needs my help and contribution

Participants also observed how they become more active and feel more attracted to help other people and places. For instance E said: *I trust that we are really into the spiritual path only when we start really give ourselves to something beyond ourselves. And that can be other person, that can be nature and that can be whatever.* To this concern R talk is relevant who believes that *God is here and heaven is not somewhere up there when we die, no we can create heaven right here right now by our actions, when we really follow what is true to our heart.*

Also others as B, G and A talks that trough meeting other people who are on the same spiritual search they were able to connect with them easier and B claims *I really learn trough this to be more human* and A added *I feel less egoistic.* D also stress that in her case being in close touch with Buddhism teachings, she started to have more personal relationship with everything around and she feels that it is her duty and responsibility to share this knowledge with other people back home. Participants claim that they become more aware about situation back home and it was an eye opener experience for them. D speaks, *it is sad how we in western world don't even take care of the closest one as our parents when they become old, we just put them into the elderly house, what is really unlike in another parts of world as is India.* She stress that trough retrospection and understanding different perceptions of people she met she becomes more compassionate.

Also C claims that important role plays interaction with people who have spiritual values who are all about serving and helping others, what was a strong influence in transformation of attitude from egocentric behavior towards others' oriented. F, E, D and C concern teachings and actions of spiritual leaders or gurus. For instance E talks about her experience with Amma the hugging guru as the most incredible experience. *It was the most blissful experience of my life, because she has a great loving energy which is impossible to explain. She really dedicate her life to make others people life better. She gives all. She hugs sometimes for 15 hours a day without stopping.* She become aware and understand how

import is to help each other in order to make things work well. *We had lot of work to do and she was taking care of us but we were taking care of whole thing. So everybody was contributing to this great thing.*

To this concern participant D also stresses that however she doesn't strictly follow philosophies of Gurus, but she really take their teachings close to her heart and consider it as an inspiration for her life. *You can see really loving action in them when they dedicate their life to serve and help other people. It is very inspiring stresses participant C.* As a result E also shared her own experience, during volunteering with Amma for 40 days, how she realized that in her life she never helped anybody truly, without expecting anything in reward, just for a first time she experienced how does it feels to fully give herself to someone else. *But there was no reward. It was really strong for me. Only intention I honestly had was to give myself and help.* To this regard B talks that Indian people are very generous and it is inspiring when you see that many times they do something for you.

D also talks that during this journey she really realized, that if she wants to change something she really has to take step towards and start doing something now not tomorrow. To this concern also A said that she feels more responsible towards helping others now. F said: *I realized I really don't have to do anything like mean to meditate that, I don't need to search more because I already have it. It is in me and in all of us. To be spiritual it means not to only benefit myself, but also give myself and help to others.*

Trough strong spiritual experiences participants as G, A, E and F realized how everything is related. F believes: *We are all connected and it is our duty as a human to help. If you can do something you have to do it. Not because you want to become better person, also not because you think you would change life of that person, I just think is justice and I always had this feeling in me.* She talks how India due to intellectual understanding she obtained from different teachings and philosophies, was necessary for her to really understand her potential, she always felt she had. *I understood in my mind that I'm a good person and I have ability to help others and that is my priority now.* Same perception has also A who claims that *I understood that I don't have to become better person or someone because I already am.*

3.2 Role of India as culturally spiritual place in transformational process

In this chapter author provides findings related to importance of the place in the process of tourist transformation. Reader find main themes organized in the table with few sub-themes related to it. Author also provides deeper description of empirical studies results in the following lines.

Table 3: Role of place in transformational process

Themes	Sub Themes/Codes
Place attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spiritual energy of the place Spirituality and religion as a part of daily life Broad amount and authenticity of spiritual practices
Contrasting culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less control more accepting and let go Gratefulness and appreciation

3.2.1 Place attachment

Under this theme three sub-themes will introduce the findings: Spiritual energy of the place, Spirituality and religion as a part of daily life and Broad amount of authenticity of spiritual practices

Spiritual energy of the place

E realize that it is easier to experience, understand and live according to who you really are when person is travelling in the supportive environment where you can be true to self without feeling guilty. G also explained that for him important factor during his spiritual journey in India plays the place as well, because it is easier to follow spiritual path when he feels supported and encouraged by the society, as everyone is living it, what he was missing in his own country. A said: *I had always that feeling that those holy places as India are very different and you really feel it more and get deeper into that than in other places.* She feels

that it has spiritual power itself and person can go deeper into spiritual experiences than in other places.

F said that India is a source and everything has deeper spiritual meaning, as water or different rituals. Lidia added *India is a place of enlightenment and spirituality is in the air. It is easier to live the experience and understand who you are in India. It is a place where many people awaken and found true self. It is a place where you connect spiritually easily. There are other spiritual places, but India is the source and possibility to get enlightened is stronger in India, because practices and foot steps of the masters are in the air.*

B claims that *experiences that you have here are so incredible. Like you can go from hell to the heaven in second, you can see the most beautiful places and at the same time the most horrible things as people starving, full of trash and it is all together there. So it just shakes you inside. Makes you feel the best and the worst, sad and than very happy, and surprised and depressed and its like boom boom boom and something happens inside.* E also added that India is really heart centered, because it is dirty, noisy and there are people and reality one have to deal with all the time. And it is in the air like ok reality is crazy, but you still can give love and be happy.

A also talks how it makes difference to be in the place where so many people really believe in God. *In Austria I never felt that. I have got closer to my spiritual path and deepen spiritual practices also because of the place itself. In Europe I was always missing that something, you know it is different like different energy.* Participant B expressed Osho's saying when talking about India: *it is not a country; India is a state of being a place where you really need to go into yourself. It is not a country, it is not a space, it is nothing it is just this experiences you have that takes you out of this world and shows you that life is something else.* What she tried to say is that India is a place which is life changing itself, because there is so many energies around *that even if you are not very open to feel this energies you feel it anyway because they are too strong. Some of them are very bad, some of them touch and it changes something in you.* E added also that *the place manifest what is in the mind and you can learn from each place something different and it happens even if you don't want to.*

Spirituality and religion as a part of daily life

D and E believe that experiences are more powerful and effective in India, because spiritual and religious practices are the part of daily life. D said that however she would be able to find spiritual and yoga activities in her country, as there is lots of retreats and meditation options, it would be different experience because it is not part of daily life and people don't really live it. She said: *Here in India I have all those spiritual reminders which help me to live my life better as prayers every morning, ceremonies, chanting mantras and everything is focused around it. It is easier to focus the mind and feel peace. I'm afraid how to hold on to it when, I get back home without those reminders.* To this concern B mentioned her first experience with spiritual journey, and she claimed that however she could really feel many things changed in her, after while being back home, she forgot it and came back to her old habit.

F also said that she came to India, because she was searching for the place that could be supportive to her inner spirituality, because she is very sensitive and feel spirituality outside. A claims that in India has such supportive climate to go deeper into experiences compare to other places. She stress: *It is amazing to be in the place where many people really believe in God.*

G and D said that in spiritual country as India they found it easier to meet same minded people, as many of them are interested in spirituality and really live by it. D claims that interaction and contact with others made her realize and accept more viewpoints of others. G also said: *It is easy to talk to people and here and conversation gets very deep what doesn't happens in my country, because we all are here for the same reason and interest. I feel really easily connected to people and discussions with same minded people influenced me a lot and it was the main spiritual activity from which I learned the most.*

To this debate E also contributes by her argument that trough interaction with people who have spiritual values, as for instance she talks about guru, what is the core what India is known for, *one is influenced and attracted towards serving and helping oriented experiences.* F also added that Indian people living by religious values and are very collective and support each other and prioritize others over themselves.

Broad amount and authenticity of spiritual practices

Due to the fact that religious traditions are part of everyday life and people really live it, it automatically opens access to different traditional spiritual practices. As majority of participants talks about, to being in the authentic environment where everyone really lives by spirituality and religion was one of the main factor which was important in the transformational process.

G claims *India is a spiritual icon so it felt right to working on myself there*. For some of them as for example in a case of D, to be in authentic environment was in the core of her experiences, because her motivation was to travel in order to gain new knowledge and understanding of different healing practices from all over the world and experiences also different spiritual practices in authentic context. A also wanted to learn how to meditate and experience Vi passana in authentic environment. *I wanted to be in touch with Hindu and Vedic philosophy and yoga and as India is the country of origin, was the best for that*.

Participant G compares his experiences in India with another spiritual destinations and he said that due to the fact that India is that huge and contrasting in each part, he had different experiences and felt different atmosphere in each part what allows him to have broader perspectives.. *and I was missing access to spiritual knowledge Of course you can do yourself, buy a book but here is like amount of retreats or spiritual offer is much bigger*.

3.2.2 Contrasting culture

In this part reader will find information about sub-themes Less control more accepting and let go, Gratefulness and appreciation

Less control more accepting and let go

What majority of participants talk about as the most significant change due to the experiences in India is the fact that they learned how to let go and accept situation as it is, without trying to control it all the time. E claims that she started to deal with life situations differently due to experiences in India as she said: *India is so crazy, that you have to deal with all the things*

and learn to accept it. Otherwise you would go mad. B and F also talk how in India nothing works, everything is totally upside down and you just have to adapt to it.

D shares the story. *The control aspect of my life really changed, because I was used to always having control on everything around me and I had a list what going to happen. And when you travel in India and nothing is going to go as you planned you really have to deal with that and be ok with that. It does not upset me anymore, I just go with flow.* C also added to this by adding how it made her realize that she doesn't have to have always certain things in her life what teach her how to accept more. D shared her story, how the culture and people were driving her crazy and pushing her limits all the time, but now she feel that she can better adapt to those circumstances. She said: *You know still when I see the cow eating the plastic bag, see all the dirt around or someone ask mi thousand times if I want tuk tuk ride, I still feel, but now I can better accept situations which are not under my control.*

Gratefulness and appreciation

Participants claim that whole India is life changing, because it is very contrasting from our society and culture. B added, that even one is travelling without intention to spiritually grow, it will affect him or her anyway. D said: *Every single level is different, and it is really hard to understand but it helps put things into retrospective.*

Majority of participants claims, that facing contrasting experiences in India increase feeling of gratefulness and appreciation as for instance D claims, *every time I have a situation that I'm not used to or familiar with it makes me to compare to the western world and being either grateful for what I have or appreciation that I don't have it in my life. Every day I appreciate something like that, what creates that appreciation and it is so many little things nice to have again sometimes. I really feel gratitude for those little things as for example being able to flush your toilet paper.* G also talks about feeling of gratitude and appreciation, but he in contrary realizes what he appreciates about their lifestyle over the modern world life. He said: *life in India is simple, poor, people have to face many difficulties and there are lots of baggers but they live more peaceful life.*

A also shares her experiences from Varanasi. *The intensity of the place and contrast is incredible. It is life changing, because you see the most beautiful and the most ugly thing or horrible things in 5 minutes. And this of course made me think how we live in bubble in Austria it is so different. So yes it made me feel grateful for having what I have back home, but also made me realize that we can live in many different circumstances if we have right values. That Polarity of the place was incredible as seeing burning bodies, dead animals in river bank, this was interesting to see how they deal with life and death as not separated.*

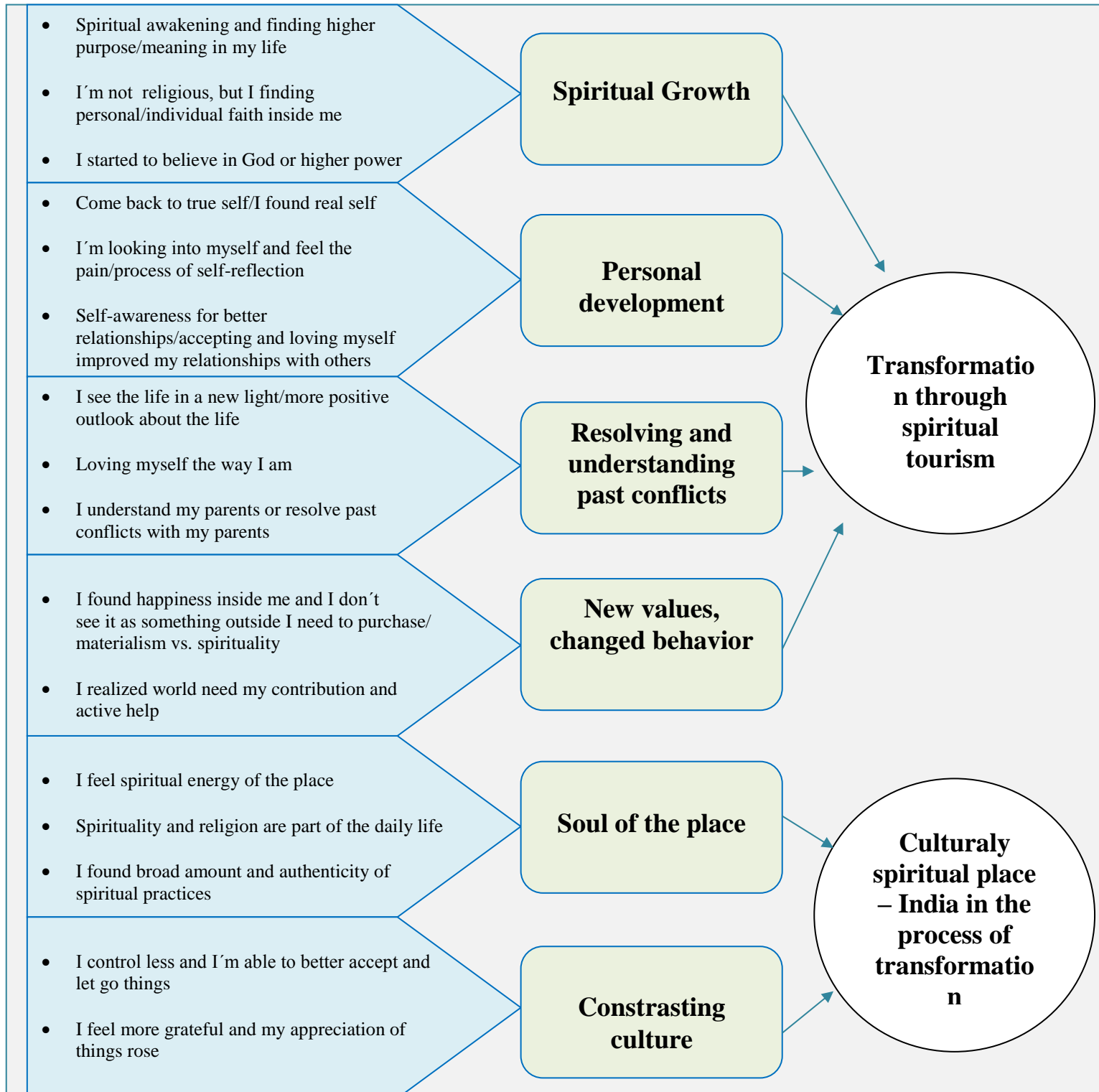
Participants as D, A, G and F stress that it is not necessary to travel in order to have spiritual experiences, because it is all inside and as Jennie said *one can have spiritual experiences also while home*. Yet, all of them believe that supportive environment, same minded people who are on the same spiritual search, broad offer of retreats which is not that accessible to them back home and separation from their daily life towards life when they have more time for themselves, makes it very helpful to process towards their goal easier and faster.

4 Discussion

In this chapter author talks about the most significant findings, which requires closer and deeper attention and she believes, this would bring better understanding and clarification to the value of the thesis. In following lines will be also heard voice of the researcher, while she critically looks at her finding and comment and relate it with previous studies in the field. Furthermore, author is also aware of certain boundaries of this work which will be explained as limitations to the research and she will provide her advice for future research which she believes would contribute to the knowledge and clarify and broaden knowledge of transformational potential of spiritual tourism and the effect on youth.

As apparent from the previous chapter in which author presented obtained findings, youth participating in spiritual journey observed certain changes and transformation in themselves and their life as a whole. Following table summarizes findings and proves that spiritual tourism has an impact on humanity development and transformation in which culturally spiritual place India played essential role.

Formula 1: Transformation of youth lives as a whole



As author analyzed gathered data she attained some important findings which she believes is in benefit for reader to discuss more in depth.

First of all while analyzing data author observed that the core and the base of the themes is meeting in one point which is that youth life was changed and influenced due to the inner transformation of their consciousness which influenced their behavior in outer world. As participants discussed how their life changed, it is not related to any big outer betterment in their life. In other words, author claims, that in the core of the transformation in this empirical study is the change of awareness and consciousness of participants, who during this journey obtained new perspectives and understanding, what transformed their believes and behaviors and shaped who they are now. Such arguments prove existing concepts about transformation, which is based on believe, that in the core of change is enhancement of consciousness (Dirkx, 1998), when one become aware about what he wasn't before and therefore his believes and meaning structures change about self and about the broader world as well (Daloz, 1986).

However, themes predominantly show and discuss personal transformation of the youth, author observed that individuals transformation resulted in direct effect on broader society. As youth personally developed, not only they were able to improve their relationships with others, but also they become more aware about their own actions and responsibilities. In other words findings show that spiritual tourism has really potential to influence masses trough self-transformation and changes of humans for more responsible, carrying and altruistic. These results are related also to the Maslows' (1971) concept of self-actualization, which he placed on the top of his pyramid of the needs, and relates to achievement of individuals' personal potential or human development beyond self (Greeny & Burke, 2007). Result shows, that those young people become more courageous and more active to follow what they believe in even if they have to face certain difficulties and they are not as influential by the outer world and society. What author believes makes from them young activist, who with obtaining such leadership values and their concern about societal and environmental needs, can bring change to broader society as they influence others by their actions and behaviors.

Other concern what author believes that should be discussing more in depth is the relation of India as culturally spiritual place to the process of transformation. As resulting from the findings, author observed two main functions of the place in the process of transformation.

On one hand place played its role as a supportive environment for personal development, due to the space and time in which one could grow. As for instance authentic spiritual experiences were emphasized by participants. On other hand India due to its contrasting and for foreigners in many times challenging culture, triggered in them feeling of certain crises to which one had to adopt what resulted in transformation. As findings shows, India itself transform individuals as for instance dealing with poverty and challenging conditions participants become more grateful and flexible in the life situations.

Implication of the research

The aim of this thesis was to investigate and study deeper potential and power of spiritual tourism. Beforehand discussed results are supportive for earlier studies which claim that spiritual tourism is a form of tourism with the strongest potential to bring the transformation not only to individuals but through their own transformation even whole societies and world can be transformed (Heintzman, 2013). As recent studies shows, there is rising awareness that we live in challenging time when it is necessary to take certain steps towards the solution through self-transformation, if we want to sustain better future (Timothy & Olsen, 2006; Reinsinger, 2013 & Heintzman, 2013). As some scholars agreed, especially contemporary youth are the ones who are affected by trends of modern world (materialism and secularization) and are the ones who can enhance such a change and become leaders, if guided towards development of right values and behaviors (Howe & Strauss, 2000). As there is lack of studies regarding to the youth and especially in connection with spiritual tourism studies, author goal was to deepen knowledge in this sphere by answering two main objectives which were stated at the beginning of the thesis: How does spiritual tourism experiences enhance transformation of contemporary youth and how does culturally-spiritual place as India played role in this process.

To this concern as considering all beforehand mentioned this study contribute to the spiritual tourism literature and to the industry as a whole. Study shows that in the core of the transformation as of person also of the broader society is the change of the consciousness. Therefore study proves that if there want to be real change observed in the world first humans have to change themselves. As empirical studies prove spiritual tourism is a form of travelling which can contribute to such a change. As these empirical studies shows potential

of spiritual tourism for human development and go beyond defining tourism as industry for relaxation, escaping from daily life and going beyond economic impacts of tourism. Author agrees with other researches as for instance Reinsinger (2013) and Heintzman (2013) that if spiritual tourism well planned it can really influence future development and direction of the society and the world. To this concern author believes, that when contributing and deepening the knowledge in this sphere, broader studies will influence definition of tourism, which is mainly considered as holiday making industry, and can transform it towards definition showing the power and potential of tourism to transform world.

As finding shows, one of the representative forms of transformational tourism is spiritual tourism. It's potential as already mentioned in earlier studies (Reinsinger, 2013) lies in its character and intentions of tourists as Norman (2011) characterized it as a form of tourism through which tourists are looking for various spiritual practices which they hope will help them to obtain spiritual growth in order to obtain spiritual benefits. Such argument was also proved in these empirical studies as youth spiritual tourist came in hope to find something what would bring betterment to their life as they felt disconnected and were searching for deeper meaning of their lives. What studies shows is that contemporary youth who are interested in spiritual tourism are those who don't agree with modern society and who are secular, therefore they are more interested in alternative spirituality which easier obtained while travelling in countries with this potential as India.

Therefore author believes that this knowledge will enhance awareness of broader public and especially authority representative what with support of past and future studies, might result in creation of new policies which would be supportive for this form of tourism. Author hopes that broadening knowledge in spiritual tourism in relation to youth travelling, authorities will become more aware about its benefits on this segment and broader society and would make it more accessible and promoted among youth. Alike this study could benefit to activists and businesses in this sphere to understand spiritual tourism, not solely as healing and meaning creating industry, but rather understand it as a tourism which through solving personal issues can contribute to the solution of broader society issues.

Smith (2003) in his studies found that however places as landscapes and peaceful environments played significant role in the process of transformation, yet country where

spiritual tourists participated in the retreat was not in importance. Findings of this empirical studies on other hand show, that in the process of transformation place played significant role, therefore for providers of spiritual tourism product it can be in benefit to understand how the place matters for personal development. This study highlight potential of culturally spiritual places as strong contributors to the process on transformation and shows how developing or poorer countries as due to the contrasting environments and situations one occurred in enhance personal change. This knowledge can show providers how the potential of developing countries can be promoted and used for benefit of society transformation.

Limitations and recommendation for further research

However, those studies provide certain answers and broaden the knowledge about transformational potential of spiritual tourism on youth life as whole on other hand it also raises additional questions which would need further investigation. As this thesis was time and space limited, and due to the subjective character of the studies, author is aware of the boundaries this thesis have.

First of all s it is not possible to directly observe experiences, data rely only on participants' ability to reflect on it and effectively communicate it, thus even author tried to bracket herself out of research as much as possible, she is aware that such action is limited to certain extend. Also as studies are very subjective in the nature this knowledge doesn't apply to the population as a whole and can't be generalized, but rather this studies aimed to provide deeper understanding of the topic trough understanding humans' spiritual tourism experiences. To this concern author believes that it would be in benefit to conduct quantitative studies which would bring more clearance to this topic and to really understand to what extend has a spiritual tourism impact as on improvement of youth lives also on broader society and world as a whole.

Other concern what author would like to highlight is the fact that all the participants were interviewed during their stay, even though they shared also their previous stories which helped to clarify how they life really change after having such experiences, most of them talk about experiences and transformational outcomes they felt in relation to the journey in India.

Even though they could already observe several changes as in themselves also in their lives, it would be in benefit to provide research how their life changed in a long run and how much they were able to apply what they learned during this journey to their life if returning to their home society. As for instance one participant shared her story from previous spiritual journey when she really felt changes in her, but after while coming back she came to her old routine, but after first spiritual journey in India everything in her life changed in a long term. Therefore it would be also in benefit provide comparative studies between various destinations and spiritual experiences in order to have deeper understanding what was the reason of this difference.

Author advices to make such knowledge more consistent would help also to do the comparison between people who participated in spiritual journey and compare it with other form of tourism consumers and those who never travelled, in order to understand to the strongest attributes of the spiritual tourism in comparison to other tourism forms.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate and provide deeper understanding how spiritual tourism can transform life of youth as a whole and understand how culturally spiritual country as India can contribute to the process. Through this explorative study, attention was paid to the experiences of youth travelers, who were participating in spiritual journey in order to spiritually and personally develop and grow, what as this research prove influence not only their life, but also has an impact on broader society and environments.

In order to provide clear and deeper understanding of the topic, author in the first place informs reader about existing literature in relation to the studied phenomenon. As previous studies show, that spiritual tourism has a potential to transform and findings showed that individuals observed change as on psychological also on behavioral level. According to the earlier research, finding claim that transformation is deeper process towards change, and the core of it is related to the change of human's attitudes and believes.

Therefore to understand how this change in individuals was created was in the interest of researcher, who looked at the process trough exploring experiences more in depth. In order to get valuable information, several in depth interviews with suitable participants were conducted, and collected data were analyzed by using bottom-up approach and thematic analysis.

Analysis is divided into two main parts which discuss findings according to the relation of themes to each research questions. In order to answer first research question about spiritual experiences and its transformational power, findings are divided into four main themes and each discuss additional sub-themes in more details. Second part of the analysis is dedicated for second research question which aims to investigate what is the role of India in the transformational process. Themes resulted from the interviews are organized in two main topics and each discuss several sub-topics. Findings show that in the core of transformation is increased consciousness, what further have an impact on individual attitudes, values and behaviors. This result not only in betterment of their personal life, also have an impact on broader society trough betterment of relationships with others and their increased interest in well being of broader society.

Although all the participants claim that they observe and see changes in themselves and in their life, the fact is they were still on their journey. Even though many of them argued that travelling is part of their lifestyle, so it is not separated from their life, still there is space for a question in relation to the durability of the transformation effects and changes in the long term. Therefore, author advises that further research should explore how the change was applied to their daily life after returning to their “home” society.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Content Form

Name or program: **EMTM (European Master of Tourism Management)**

Master thesis topic: **Spiritual travel as the solution for youth in 21st century?**

Student/researcher name: **Veronika Sustakova**

Contact e-mail: *sustakovaveronika@gmail.com*

Supervisor name: **Prof. Dr. Ljubica Knezevic Cvelbar**

University in Ljubljana, Ekonomska Fakulteta

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I'm a student of European Master of Tourism Management and I'm conducting research on spiritual tourism directed to understand what are the experiences of youth westerners with spiritual travel in India, in order to see how this form of tourism can be related to modern world phenomenon.

During this study, you will be asked some questions regarding to your experiences with spiritual travel in India in relation to your day to day life. This interview is designed to take approximately one hour in length, however please feel free to expand on topic or talk about related ideas. Also, in any case you feel that questions asked can't be answered or you don't feel comfortable answering, please do not hesitate to point it out and we will move to the next question.

To participate in this project is completely voluntary and that you are free to decline to participate, without consequences, at any time prior to or at any point during the activity. Information you provide will be kept confidential and in secured, and will be use only for the purpose to completing beforehand mentioned master thesis research, and won't be used in any way that can identify you. All collected date (responses, notes, and records) will be kept in secured environment and if you decide to withdrawn from research, the data will be destroyed. If requested, a copy of student assignment will be send to you.

The results of this research might be used in publications, reports or presentations, but your personal data will be anonymous (using different names). You should be also aware, that participating in this research doesn't causes any risks, beyond those experienced in everyday life.

Participant's agreement

I grant permission for recording the interview

YES

NO

I grant permission to use one of the following

-----My first name only

-----My full name

-----Just a pseudonym

I, _____ (participant's name) have read carefully and I am aware that my participation in this research is voluntary and I understand all beforehand stated conditions and information. Also the intent and purpose of this research is clear to me and I consent to participate in today's interview.

Participant's signature

Date

Interviewer's signature

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. Your voice is important 😊

I would like to kindly ask, if you can introduce yourself to me?

1. Gender?
2. What is your age?
3. Country of origin?
4. Education?
5. Profession/Occupation
6. Marital status
7. Monthly income (state if self sponsored or by other)

Appendix 2: Interview

A: MOTIVATION, PURPOSE OF TRAVEL

- 1. Can you tell me please what is the main purpose of your trip/journey in India?**
 - What are you doing here/Why are you here?
 - For how long do you stay?
- 2. What was the main motivation which made you to come here? Do you remember what was the trigger which made you to decide to go?**
 - can you tell me more about it?
- 3. Can you tell me more about your travel experiences in India (Haridwar, Rishikesh..)**

What does this journey personally means to you?

 - what were you doing, what kind of spiritual holiday?
- 4. Why did you choose India as a destination for your holiday? Why not other destination? Does this particular destination has a specific meaning for your trip?**
 - to see if the place plays specific/important role in their travel experiences

B. SPIRITUALITY, SPIRITUAL TRAVEL

- 5. How would you describe term spiritual travel in your own words? What comes first to your mind when you imagine spiritual holiday?**
- 6. Do you consider your travel experiences in India as spiritual?**
 - can you explain me why yes or why no?
- 7. How do you understand term spirituality in your own meaning?**
- 8. Do you consider yourself spiritual? Can you explain if yes or no?**
- 9. Does spirituality and religion remains you the same or you consider it as two different concepts? Can you explain?**
- 10. Do you follow or apply any spiritual practice into your day to day life?**
 - if possible would tell me more about it?

C: TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

- 11. What was the most memorable moment what you experienced during your travel in India**
 - Can you please tell me more about this experience?
- 12. Did you experienced any situation during your trip which you would call life-changing?**
 - Can you tell me more about it?
- 13. Where there any moments during your trip/travel which made you think and reflect upon your life and yourself?**
 - Can you share those moments with me?
- 14. Can you already notice any personal changes or self-development caused by this holiday?**
 - Would you mind to share it with me?
- 15. I would like to ask you to go back in time and reflect a bit upon yourself. Can you describe me what kind of person you think you were before this trip and how you see yourself today?**
 - what would you highlight as most significant change?

E: ROLE OF THE PLACE

- 16. Have you ever felt that even if you have it all, there is still something missing in your life what would make you totally happy?**
 - what was it? Can you tell me more about it?
- 17. Have you ever experienced similar holiday? If yes, how did your life change in long term? Did you change anything in your day to day lifestyle or after while you got back to the same routines?**
 - can you tell me more about it. What was it?
- 18. What is the role of travelling in India itself in gaining those spiritual experiences? Do you think you can get the same experiences without travelling to other country?**