

**A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE RELIGIOUS
FESTIVAL AND PILGRIMAGE OF MAHA
SHIVARATRI IN MAURITIUS: THE RELIGIOUS
EXPERIENCES OF LOCAL HINDU PARTICIPANTS,
THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE RELIGIOUS
EXPERIENCES AND THE PERCEIVED POTENTIAL
IMPACTS OF ANY FUTURE COMMODITISATION ON
THOSE EXPERIENCES**

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ABSTRACT

“A critical evaluation of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri in Mauritius: the religious experiences of local Hindu participants, the authenticity of the religious experiences and the perceived potential impacts of any future commoditisation on those experiences”
(Yuvraj Vikramsingh Bheekie)

This study focuses on the annual, and century-old, religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) in Mauritius. The Festival, consisting of a pilgrimage to a sacred site, is celebrated by those of the Hindu faith in reverence to Lord Shiva. This research critically evaluated the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival to the local Hindu participants, the perceived authenticity of the religious experiences and the perceived impacts on these religious experiences resulting from any future commoditisation of the Festival and its site. The research focused on three sets of stakeholders: the Mauritius Religious Authorities (RA) who have religious and/or cultural inputs into the Festival, the ‘Public Sector’ organisations (PS) involved in the implementation of current and future tourism policies relating to the Festival and the Mauritian Hindu residents who had participated in the Festival.

The overall research was guided by two conceptual frameworks for the data collection and analysis. The first framework was developed from a critical literature review identifying key factors that required investigation. These included such considerations as commoditisation, religion, religious experiences and authenticity of religious experiences. The second framework provided the theoretical underpinning for the study of religious experiences (*core religious experiences*, *actual Festival product* and *augmented nature of the religious experiences*) offered by the Festival, based on Levitt’s (1981) model and Kotler’s (1994) conceptualisation of the product levels. The adoption of a theoretical framework from marketing is one of the main contributions of this study.

An overall sequential mixed methods approach was adopted in this study. Initially, there was a small-scale exploratory set of interviews with Mauritians in the United Kingdom. This was followed by concurrent qualitative and quantitative research in Mauritius. The qualitative research consisted of interviews with eight representatives of the RAs and three representatives of the PS. These informants, answering on behalf of their organisation, provided deep insights into the encouragement of tourists and the perceived possible outcomes on the authenticity of the religious experiences. For the quantitative research, a self-completed questionnaire, using the drop and collect method, was employed. The questionnaire covered the behaviours, attitudes and characteristics of the Mauritian Hindu residents who had attended the Festival in the past. A total of 412 usable questionnaires form the basis of the analyses in the study. The adoption of a mixed methods approach in this study is another academic contribution of this Thesis.

The findings revealed that the *core religious experiences* are made up of ‘closeness and connectedness to God’, ‘self-purification’, ‘self-transformation’ and ‘self-actualisation’. In regard to the authenticity of the religious experiences, the research identified that there were ‘authentic’ religious experiences, ‘authentic’ physical experiences and ‘authentic’ social experiences which, if lost, would have significant detrimental impacts on the participants’ religious experiences. The RAs, PS and local Hindu residents were not against the idea of encouraging more tourists to attend the Festival. However, there was concern that tourists would not adhere to certain behaviours, as would a Hindu participant, and in so doing would undermine the religious nature and the authenticity of the Festival. Overall, the findings have implications for both the RAs and the PS. Recommendations were provided as to how the current religious offerings could be bolstered and how the goals of commoditisation could be met while protecting the authenticity of the religious experiences.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to investigate and provide empirical evidence on the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Mauritian religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) to the local Hindu participants. It also assesses the nature of and attitudes towards the perceived possible impacts of promoting and developing the Festival and its site as a tourist attraction on the religious experiences for the local Hindu residents, who participate in the Festival.

This is the introductory chapter and it comprises four sections. First, Section 1.2 provides an outline of the research background, including an overview of the political, economic and social context of Mauritius and Mauritian society as well as the Festival under investigation. Thereafter, Section 1.3 sets out the rationale for undertaking the research. This is followed by Section 1.4 which outlines the aim and objectives of the study. This chapter concludes with Section 1.5 which summarises the structure of the Thesis.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

1.2.1 A brief introduction

Religion plays a salient and influential part in many people's lives across societies and cultures (Turner 2010; Obadia and Wood 2011; Woodhead et al. 2016; Newman and Graham 2018). Essentially, *“religion has retained a significant place as a social movement, with a complexity of structures and functions that pervades cultures and traditions”* (Raj and Morpeth 2007, p.1). For those following a religion, the religious beliefs and teachings are applied either consciously or unconsciously in their (personal and social) lives. This can influence directly or indirectly their choices, thoughts, attitudes and behaviours (Schwartz 1992; Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004; Fontaine et al. 2005; Choi et al. 2013). In general, those following a religion have unique sets of beliefs that instil values, practices, principles and knowledge.

Even though all the mainstream religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, have their own sets of beliefs and teachings, they all provide their adherents with the opportunities to practice and perpetuate their belief system by attending to religious festivals, by participating in pilgrimages and/or by undertaking religious practices at sacred places. These practices and opportunities hold and play a central place in the adherents' religious lives. Festivals, for example, bring people together (Suntikul and Dorji 2016) and offer them the opportunity to move away from their routine lives (Falassi 1987; Duffy and Mair 2017) in order to celebrate or follow historic

traditions (Ahmed 1992; Nolan and Nolan 1992; Ruback et al. 2008; Mair 2019) and perform symbolic practices or rituals (Duffy and Mair 2017). Such ‘escape’ from one’s daily life and crises allows an individual to experience his/her true sense of self and a sense of belonging. This is no different for those partaking in a pilgrimage to a sacred site or performing religious activities and rituals at a sacred place. In fact, such practices can lead to spiritual, restorative, educational and social experiences (Bond 2015).

Religious festivals, pilgrimages and sacred sites entail strong symbolic meanings as well as social and cultural significances. People get involved in religious festivals, pilgrimages and activities at sacred sites to fulfil their religious obligations and duties. The experiences sought and gained are paramount for the believers as these determine not only their identity and core belief systems but also their attachment, loyalty, level of satisfaction and future behavioural intentions towards their religion.

In the Hindu religion, religious festivals involve rituals which are undertaken as a means of transmitting and maintaining long existing cultural and religious traditions (Shinde 2015). They often consist of large processions or pilgrimages to a sacred site, thus allowing an individual to bond with others, reaffirm his/her identity and maintain his/her existing religious traditions (Whaling 2009; Shinde 2010; Flueckiger 2015; Singh 2015).

One such festival is the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri celebrated by those of the Hindu faith on the island of Mauritius. Prior to providing an explanation of the Festival and its components that will be assessed in this Thesis, the following sub-section provides an overview of the political, economic and social context of Mauritius and the Mauritian society.

1.2.2 The island of Mauritius and the Mauritian society

1.2.2.1 A brief overview of the Mauritius

The island of Mauritius (Mauritius) located in the Indian Ocean approximately 500 miles east of Madagascar (see Figure 1.1). It is known as a cultural cornucopia consisting of migrants coming from Asia (India and China), Africa, and Europe (Bissoonaath 2011; Ng Tseung-Wong and Verkuyten 2013; Owodally 2014). Mauritius is inhabited by nearly 1.2 million people (Housing and Population Census 2011) and is renowned as an exemplary nation due to the peace and unity which reign across the island’s pluri-ethnic society (Carroll and Carroll 1997; Dobson 2007; Ministry of Tourism 2017). The 2011 Census data indicated that approximately 50% of the overall population are Hindus and they represent the largest ethnic group on the island followed by Christians ($\approx 30\%$) and Muslims ($\approx 18\%$), among others.



Figure 1.1: Map of Mauritius (amended from The University of Texas at Austin 2019)

1.2.2.2 The political context of Mauritius

Historically, Mauritius has undergone successive phases of colonisation by Europeans, in particular the Dutch, Portuguese, French and British. In 1810, during the battle of the Vieux Grand-Port, the British took over the island from the French who claimed to occupy it from 1715 (Aumeerally 2005). On 12th March 1968, after 158 years of the British rule, Mauritius became independent and a sovereign state within the Commonwealth. After independence, Mauritius had its first Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, who is also known as the father of the nation. Twenty four years later, on 12th March 1992, the then Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, proclaimed Mauritius a Republic.

Today, the colonial legacies left by both the French and British still mark their presence and remain vivid within the Mauritian society. For instance, even after fifty one years of independence, English remains the official language of Mauritius and French is extensively used by local people. Also, “the Constitution in force in Mauritius since March 12, 1968 was adopted by the United Kingdom Parliament. Although the Constitution was largely based on the ‘Whitehall model’...it included several provisions that were unique to Mauritius” (Meetarbhan 2018, p.15). Moreover, the Mauritian Constitution adopts the French Napoleonic Code which has been inherited from the French colonial heritage prior to the British regime. Being the supreme law of the country, the Constitution of Mauritius upholds the fundamental and democratic rights and freedom of every

Mauritian citizen. For example, the Mauritian Constitution embodies the freedom of conscience, creed and religious belief, amongst others. This means that an individual is free to practice and propagate his/her religion, belief and teaching as well as to participate or attend religious ceremonies (Mauritius Assembly 2019).

The Mauritian political system is based on a unicameral multi-party parliamentary democracy that is modelled after the Westminster system (Bunwaree and Kasenally 2005; Ramtohul 2006; Mauritius Assembly 2019). That said, coalitions are usually formed close to the time of an election (Sobhee 2009). The election of the Mauritian National Assembly usually takes place every five years. Of the 70 members in the local National Assembly, 62 members (2 are allocated to the elected members of the island of Rodrigues, a Mauritian territory with around 42 000 inhabitants) are directly elected through the universal adult suffrage and the remaining 8 members are non-elected candidates who are appointed through the ‘best losers’ system to ensure a fair representation of ethnic minorities (Bunwaree and Kasenally 2005; Ramtohul 2006; BTI 2018). The Head of the Government becomes the Prime Minister whilst the Head of State is the President (Mauritius Assembly 2019).

The political system in Mauritius is greatly influenced by features such as religion, communalism and caste-based affiliations as well as socio-cultural and religious organisations which strongly dominate the Mauritian political system (Ramtohul 2015; BTI 2018). In regard to communalism, this is seen to strengthen at the time of elections (Ramtohul 2015). Since independence, Mauritius has, with one exception, always had a Prime Minister of the Hindu-faith, the exception being Paul Raymond Bérenger, a Franco-Mauritian, who was appointed to the position of Prime Minister from 2003 to 2005 based on a coalition agreement between two parties (the Movement Socialiste Mauricien with the leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth and the Movement Militant Mauricien led by Paul Raymond Bérenger) for the 2000 general election (Ramtohul 2015; BTI 2018).

The link between political parties or politicians and socio-cultural and religious organisations dates before the independence of Mauritius. For instance, in 1962, the Government made the move to subsidise these socio-cultural and religious organisations (Ramtohul 2015). Since then, the part played by these organisations within local political affairs remains prominent. Leaders of the socio-cultural and religious organisations are nominees/board members of institutions such as state and/or parastatal bodies and they tend to support a political party close to or during an election (Ramtohul 2015). In contrast, leaders of political parties or politicians are invited to religious festivals and ceremonies where they often deliver speeches. This is an opportunity for politicians to express their religious identity if they are of the same religious background and it is a means of showing tolerance among the pluri-ethnic society and of strengthening national identity if they are not of the same religious denomination.

Despite the complex nature of the political context, Mauritius remains an exemplary and extraordinary case of political stability, successful sustained democracy and viable economy unlike other African counterparts (Sebudubudu and Mooketsane 2016; Eriksen and Ramtohul 2018). One of the main reasons for such remarkable accolade is that Mauritius has been governed and led by devoted and visionary prime ministerships (Brautigam and Diolle 2009; Sebudubudu and Mooketsane 2016). Also, it can be said that the fair representation of different members in terms of religious and ethnic background in the National Assembly and in key state and/or parastatal institutions has fostered political and social stability as well as peace, justice and harmony in the pluri-ethnic Mauritian society.

1.2.2.3 The economic context of Mauritius

In the 1960s, James Meade, a Nobel Prize economist laureate, painted a doomsayer and gloomy picture of the future of the Mauritian economy (Meade 1961; Brautigam and Diolle 2009; Vandemoortele and Bird 2011; BTI 2018). No doubt, Mauritius faced several challenges prior to and during the early years of independence. For example, the island's geographic/remote location (away from other landmasses) in the Indian Ocean and its tropical climate, single-crop economy relying predominantly on sugarcane industry and the sugar production/trade, and a dense and multi-ethnic population experiencing a high unemployment rate and facing ethnic tensions were believed to have negative bearings on its fate (Meade 1961; Vandemoortele and Bird 2011; Svirydzenka and Petri 2017; Eriksen and Ramtohul 2018). Notwithstanding these drawbacks, Mauritius emerged as a beacon of economic success, which is praised by analysts, researchers and scholars. This economic 'miracle' and performance are praised by several scholars in the literature (Brautigam 1999; Subramanian and Roy 2001; Sobhee 2009; Frankel 2010). This remarkable economy was achieved through many factors, but two will be elaborated upon here. Firstly, in the 1980s, the Government of Mauritius took the initiatives to put in place (reliable and competent) institutions that functioned effectively and ensured good governance. Sobhee (2009, p.35) considers that "*institutional quality by far constitutes an important channel which determines credibility in local institutions, confidence of the international community and overall macro-economic stability.*" Secondly, the Government of Mauritius sought to diversify the Mauritian economy by developing the tourism, manufacturing/textile and financial/banking sectors. The Information Technology (IT) sector was developed as another key pillar in the 1990s (BTI 2018). The diversification of the economy ensured viable economic growth and helped the country's economy to become more resilient in facing changes in the global market conditions (Sandbrook 2005; Eriksen and Ramtohul 2018). In short, over the last five decades, major structural transformations were implemented in order to restore macroeconomic fundamentals. As a result, Mauritius has established a viable economy shifting from a mono-crop economy to a service-oriented one. Mauritius was initially a low-income economy but has now developed into an upper middle-income economy. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently reported that the Government of Mauritius is now aiming to make Mauritius a high-income economy by 2030 (IMF 2019). Furthermore, the report indicates that the

Mauritian economy is flourishing at a steady rate, with an estimated GDP of 3.8% and unemployment rate of 7.1% in 2017.

Mauritius has positioned itself as a service-oriented economy, mainly through the tourism, IT and financial sectors. Tourism has been a key driver of economic development in Mauritius and is the fourth pillar of economy after the Textiles industry, the Financial and Insurance industry and the Wholesale and retail trade (Ministry of Tourism 2017). Tourism has been seen as a lucrative business in the past, in particular before independence and a decade after independence, and Mauritius continues to focus on targeting high-end tourism, i.e. high spending tourists, rather than mass tourism. Essentially, such a strategy was a means of keeping the number of tourists low to reduce social and environmental implications resulting from tourism (YeungLamKo 1998; Brautigam and Diolle 2009). Mauritius remains an exclusive destination, thus making it an internationally renowned destination for luxury holidays. In 2017, around 1.34 million tourists visited Mauritius. The three main markets were (20.4%) France, (11.2%) United Kingdom and (10.9%) Reunion Island (Ministry of Tourism 2019). For the same year, official figure show that the tourism industry contributed to 8% of GDP and 10% of the overall employment (Strategic Plan 2018-2021).

The tourism sector provides a range of direct and indirect benefits. Tourism empowers women, creates jobs and business opportunities, enhances export revenues and the living standards of Mauritians and helps to alleviate poverty (Ministry of Tourism 2019; Strategic Plan 2018-2021). Additionally, a significant foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow from this sector has fostered economic diversification and growth (Fauzel et al. 2016). In essence, the tourism industry has led to socio-economic progress in the country. To further develop and consolidate the tourism industry, other types of tourists are being targeted, in particular cruise and cultural tourists. Religious festivals, events and heritage sites are being promoted in brochures, websites and visitor guides to raise awareness (MTPA 2013; Strategic Plan 2018-2021). According to the Mauritius cultural tourism sector 2017 to 2021 (no date), cultural tourism would help to preserve and promote cultures and heritage, to boost economic development and jobs and so on. However, such an attempt may have negative implications for the local people and their experiences. This research will therefore seek to explore the perceived possible impacts of promoting and developing one of the religious festivals, the pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri, as a tourist attraction on the religious experiences for the local Hindu residents.

1.2.2.4 The social context of Mauritius

Mauritius was an uninhabited island until settlement started during the French occupation after 1715. The French brought thousands of slaves from Africa, in particular from Mozambique and Madagascar, to work on the sugarcane plantations. Under British rule in 1835 slavery was abolished. However, a different category of forced labour, known as indentured labourers, was

brought to Mauritius from India to work on the sugarcane plantations. By 1910, there were over 450,000 Indian indentured labours in Mauritius (Allen 1999). In the same year, the indentured labourer system came to an end. Today, Mauritius is one of the most densely populated places in the world, with a diverse ethnic and cultural society whereby ancestral roots can be traced from different continents, such as Europe, Africa and Asia.

The sugarcane industry has been the backbone of the Mauritian economy for centuries and has largely contributed to shaping the demographics of Mauritius with immigrants coming to work in the sugarcane fields. The Franco-Mauritians ($\approx 2\%$), those of the French origin, have significant holdings in the sugar industry, economic power and amount of resources while the Mauritian Hindus ($\approx 50\%$) are influential both in the political and social sphere (Hempel 2009; Ng Tseung-Wong and Verkuyten 2013; Ramtohol 2015; BTI 2018). The Hindu community, originating from different parts of India, can be divided into linguistic groups, mainly Hindi speaking/Bhojpuri, Marathi, Telegu and Tamil, as well as the caste system whereby the Hindi speaking Hindus can be categorised as Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Rajputs and Ravived (Ramtohol 2015; BTI 2018). Apart from the Franco-Mauritians and Hindus, the island is blended with other cultural and ethnic groups, such as the Sino-Mauritians, Afro-Mauritians and the Muslims. The Sino-Mauritians are people of Chinese origin who came to Mauritius as traders and merchants whilst the Afro-Mauritians are mainly composed of African and Madagascan descendants who worked in the sugarcane fields during French rule. Each group of these settlers/migrants has brought along their own inherent culture, religious beliefs and traditions, languages, etc. This makes Mauritius an island of migrants with its own cultural and ethnic complexities. Even though this multi-cultural and pluri-ethnic diversified society was seen as a setback in the 1960s, Mauritius has used such particularity to draw foreign investors into the island and to strengthen commercial activities with various continents (Subramanian and Roy 2001; Sobhee 2009). Mauritius continues to develop and enhance international ties with several countries for economic and infrastructural development.

According to BTI (2018), Mauritius has established a very good social welfare regime for its citizens. For instance, education and transport, for students from pre-primary to tertiary levels, are free. Access to free education has helped to reduce illiteracy on the island. Based on the 2016 estimate from the Central Intelligence Agency (2019) report, literary rate of the population aged from 15 and above were 93.2% (Male = 95.4% and Female = 91%). Despite its limited resources, Mauritius has made significant progress for the welfare of its people. Since independence, the country continues to provide free healthcare services and treatments. As a matter of fact, in 2017, Mauritius excels in the Human Development Index valued at 0.790, thus making the island in the high development category and first in African region (UNDP 2019). The social welfare regime currently in place for Mauritians has contributed to the advancement of the island and the islanders as well as a great move towards poverty reduction. However, there are certain challenges in terms of social inequality and poverty in relation to female households (BTI 2018). Gender inequality also

figures in the Mauritian political system where women candidates are under-represented even though they are numerically valued at 52% of the overall voters (Ramtohl 2006).

Mauritius has made remarkable progress over the last five decades. However, the core Mauritian society remains still a very fragile one. Prior to independence, Mauritius faced ethnic riots twice in 1964 and 1968 and post-independence, the island went through a dark episode in 1999 after the death of the singer Kaya while in police custody. However, unlike other African countries, Mauritius has never witnessed severe political and social unrest situations that damage the social, political and economic environment. Nevertheless, national identity remains weak in Mauritius given that an individual recognises himself/herself in accordance to his/her ethnic community (Carroll and Carroll 1999). After independence, ethnic groupings were discouraged by the Government of Mauritius with a view to foster the Mauritian identity (Xygalatas et al. 2018). Yet, according to Eriksen and Ramtohl (2018, p.7), *“at the level of Mauritian society, although the country has not experienced long-standing or devastating ethnic conflict and violence, the often-praised ‘unity in diversity’ remains fragile and divisions persist in the country at all levels”*. Another recent example is that a Vice Prime Minister had to step down after making both derogatory and discriminatory communal remarks on a particular ethnic group (Eriksen and Ramtohl 2018). These historical facts show the sensitive nature of the social fabric of the Mauritian society. Yet, Mauritius is considered as an exemplary nation due to the peace and unity reigning across the island in its multi-cultural and pluri-ethnic society (Carroll and Carroll 1997; Dobson 2007).

Finally, the Government of Mauritius provides financial support to all the religious and socio-cultural organisations on the island. This helps in the promotion and preservation of the culture, identity, traditions and so on. Public holidays are decreed for main religious/cultural celebrations. This does not only allow a specific ethnic group to enjoy the celebration but it helps other Mauritians to understand and appreciate other celebrations apart from theirs. The Mauritian Hindus are able to celebrate Diwali, Ganesh Chaturti, Maha Shivaratri, amongst others that allow them to express their identity, disposition and religious belief. Even though the languages spoken by Mauritians on the island include English, French and Creole, religious ceremonies are performed in one's own ancestral language (Sonck 2005).

1.2.3 The Festival studied

1.2.3.1 The religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri in Mauritius

The religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri on the island of Mauritius commemorates and is focused on Lord Shiva, the Supreme Being in the Hindu Pantheon. The word *Maha* means great, *Shivaratri* means the night of Lord Shiva and therefore literally Maha Shivaratri is *‘The great night of Lord Shiva’* (Mittal 2014). This night takes place on the 13th or 14th night in the dark half of

the lunar month, more precisely in the month of *Magh* (Pattanaik 2012) which according to the Gregorian calendar is equivalent to either February or March. This occasion remains amongst the most popular and imperative religious celebrations in the Hindu calendar. The Festival is one of a kind; not only is it one of the main Hindu festivals in terms of scale of public religious performance and local participation but it is also the only Hindu religious festival embodying a pilgrimage to a sacred site on the island (Eisenlohr 2004, 2006). Since 1931, the Festival has been a national public holiday (Eisenlohr 2004, 2006; Sewtohl and Ramdin 2012).

For the period of the Festival, some four hundred thousand devotees converge to Ganga Talao, the pilgrimage/sacred site (see Figure 1.2), to fetch the holy water and then offer it to the *linga*, phallic representation of Lord Shiva, in either the temples where they reside (Dulthumun 2016) or the temples at the sacred site on the night of the Festival. The scale of participation is evidenced in official figure retrieved from *Le Mauricien*, a local newspaper, Eisenlohr (2004, 2006) attested that 400,000 participants attended the 2002 Festival. Eisenlohr (2004) further added that every year nearly 300,000 participants undertake the pilgrimage and walk a distance of 40 miles. These numbers explicitly indicate the importance attached to Lord Shiva as well as the religious significance of the Festival and site for the local Hindu community. In essence, the Festival is celebrated by those of the Hindu faith in Mauritius, with pomp, pageantry and conviviality, and utmost zeal, faith and devotion in reverence to Lord Shiva.

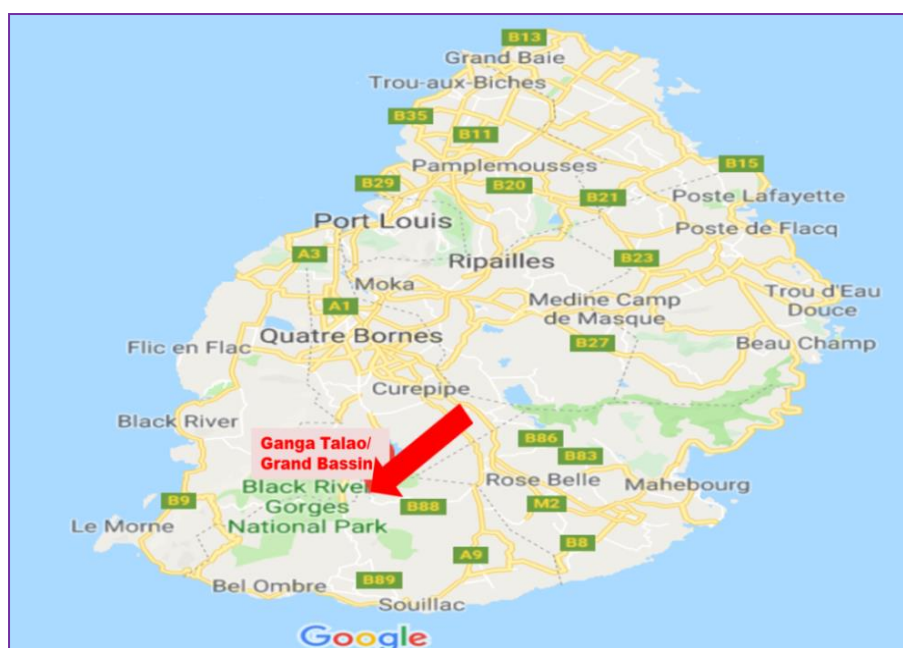


Figure 1.2: Map of Mauritius indicating Ganga Talao (amended from Google Maps 2019)

Basically, the Festival comprises four components: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja (worshipping four times at three-hour intervals during the whole night for Lord Shiva).

1.2.3.2 The four components of the Festival

1.2.3.2.1 The preparation

Preparation is a salient component of the Festival and begins well ahead of the day of the Festival (Paramananda 2006). In this stage, the devotees fast, although the strictness of fasting varies from person to person and is self-imposed. There are different ways to fast, for example by consuming vegetarian food, abstaining from eating certain food and any food, refraining from drinking alcohol (Paramananda 2006; Purgus 2014). For some, fasting means taking limited food or no food at all during the day and the person ends the fast after sunset with one single meal (Purgus 2014).

During the preparation component, some pilgrims build a Kanwar which is a decorative and artistic wooden structure that is used to carry the holy water on the way back from the sacred site, all the while maintaining the purity of the sacred water by ensuring that it does not come in contact with anything considered to be impure (Rughoobur 2014). This is why those building the Kanwar are likely to follow a strict vegetarian diet (Tiwari 2017). The Kanwars are made in all towns and villages by youngsters, led by seniors, to represent spiritual symbols (Dayal no date). Originally, Kanwars used to be a stick attached to two water pots (Tiwari 2017) or a simple arc structure but have now evolved into totally different structures that are well decorated and designed (Paramananda 2006); it can also be large structures rolled on wheels, looking like parade floats to be carried for long distances (Tiwari 2017).

1.2.3.2.2 The journey to and from Ganga Talao

Whether the Festival is in India or in Mauritius, it is associated with pilgrimage, a demonstration of sacrifice (Paramananda 2006). While in India, pilgrims go to the sacred river of the Ganges, in Mauritius, they go to the sacred lake of Ganga Talao to collect the holy water as both the Ganges River and the lake at Ganga Talao are considered sacred by those of the Hindu faith. Ganga Talao is a place which uplifts the Mauritian Hindus as it has the same symbolic meaning as the Ganges River in India (Tiwari 2017). According to Paramananda (2006), the act of taking on a pilgrimage is symbolical as it requires the pilgrims to reflect on the significance of the Festival. The pilgrimage is more of an inner journey on a quest for bliss, peace and liberation; it represents a journey of the mind (Paramananda 2006). It involves carrying Kanwars, listening devotional songs and the chanting of *kirtans* related to Lord Shiva, his consort or other Hindu deities along the way (Dayal no date).

1.2.3.2.3 *The visit to Ganga Talao*

Ganga Talao, also recognised locally as Grand-Bassin, is situated in an isolated mountain area in the south of Mauritius, more specifically in the district of Savanne. This site represents a religious landmark for the local Hindus. It is located on a 20 acres natural park with a scenic landscape and is renowned for having two 108 feet Hindu statues, Lord Shiva/Mangal Mahadev and Goddess Durga (the statue was inaugurated in September 2017). The site has a lake which is a volcanic crater that has turned into a natural lake.

Ganga Talao became particularly important for Hindus in Mauritius because of a priest called Pandit Jhummon Giri Napal Gossagne (Pandit Gossagne). He was originally from Bihar, a place near the Ganges River in India. In 1897, after having recurring dreams about a lake, hidden in a forest, whose water is connected to the river of Ganga in the Himalayas, India, he set out to find this mysterious place from his village Triolet, a place in the north of the island (Sewtohul and Ramdin 2012; Sewtohul 2014). He was accompanied by some friends in search of the holy place on foot. After several days, they reached the lake with a lot of difficulty, with no road leading there, through thick bushes in the forest. The pilgrimage paid off and Pandit Gossagne named this place “Pari Talao” as in his dreams, he had seen *paries*, fairies, who were dancing on an island situated in the middle of the lake (Sewtohul 2014). On his return to his village, Pandit Gossagne met with Pandit Sajiwon and they both decided to undertake a pilgrimage in the Honour of Lord Shiva in 1898 with seven other devotees of Lord Shiva (Sewtohul and Ramdin 2012). At the site, they collected water from the lake and on their return, they went to a temple in Triolet and offered it as libation to Lord Shiva, thereby completing the first Hindu pilgrimage in Mauritius. The news of the pilgrimage spread over the island and gradually more and more people started converging to the sacred lake. In 1972, Pari Talao was officially named as “Ganga Talao” after the Head Priest, Acharya Vidya Nidhi Panday, brought Ganga water (i.e. water from the Ganges River) from Haridwar in India and poured it ceremoniously into the sacred lake.

The sacred water has a special significance and it is used during the performance of rites (Dayal no date). Following developments over the years to accommodate more pilgrims, Tiwari (2017) states that nowadays participants are welcomed by the 108 feet statue of Lord Shiva on reaching the sacred site and they feel peace in their hearts on seeing the statue. She also adds that ahead of the statue, the participants are submerged in the sound of bells, bhajans (religious songs), reciting of the mantras ‘Har Har Mahadev’ and Vedic chants of priests. The participants go to the lake to touch the holy water which they sprinkle on their head, face and body to purify them before beginning their prayers (Dayal no date). Offerings such as bananas, coconuts and flowers are placed in a clean place close to the lake. Incense sticks, along with camphor, are lit and prayers for the Goddess Ganga are performed. This is followed by placing lit camphor on a betel leaf and gently waving it into the lake. Then, water from the lake is put in a container or taken in both hands and poured back in the lake with more prayers and the coconut is broken. At the end of the prayers, some water from

the lake is transferred to a container for prayers to Lord Shiva at a later point in a temple (Rughoobur 2014). However, Tiwari (2017) notes that the beauty of the Festival lies outside of the temples, with a beautiful ambiance and a spiritual atmosphere. Figure 1.3 illustrates the sacred site during night-time for the Festival. At the completion of all prayers, outside and inside the temples, the participants return home. For those participants who walked, on their return home they are greeted with *aarti*, religious rituals and their feet are washed for having upheld their *dharma*, religious duty (Dayal no date).



Figure 1.3: Ganga Talao for the Festival during night-time (Emrith 2019)

1.2.3.2.4 The Char Pahar ki Pooja

The Char Pahar ki Pooja is performed on the great night of Shiva and it is the final component of the Festival. It concludes the homage to Lord Shiva. The participants are expected to stay awake throughout the night and pray. This consists of four stages of special prayers and offerings performed from 18.00 to 06.00 (Ramchurn 2014). The devotees participate by pouring the sacred water on the *linga*. After the bath, the *linga* is clothed in white, symbolising purity, and the behl leaves are offered.

1.2.3.3 The development of Ganga Talao and the Festival

1.2.3.3.1 The development at Ganga Talao

Ganga Talao, previously being a volcanic crater which has turned into a natural lake, was not easily accessible, especially with no proper structures in place. For pilgrim(s) to carry out their pilgrimage, they had to act on their own (Sewtohul and Ramdin 2012). Development occurred at a very slow rate, starting from 1931 when the Hindu Maha Sabha, the first Hindu Association in Mauritius, undertook to help the Hindus, this included looking after the pilgrims on their way to Ganga Talao and its site (Sewtohul and Ramdin 2012). The Hindu Maha Sabha made great contributions for the Mauritian Hindus, be it in terms of catering for pilgrims along the way to Ganga Talao during the Festival or promoting the Hindu religion, traditions and culture. All these became possible as this organisation received the land around Ganga Talao on a 99-year lease to be used as a pilgrimage centre and for constructing temples. Although the Hindu Maha Sabha has enhanced the site by constructing temples, adding statues and idols and so on, it is not the only active organisation at Ganga Talao. The Hindu Maha Sabha had the support of the Government of Mauritius and other private parties and socio-cultural groups to further develop the site. Despite such development, laws were passed to preserve and safeguard the area at or around the lake. For instance, the shooting of wild animals and fishing became illegal and swimming in the sacred lake is prohibited. The site has been internationally recognised and the area around it was awarded the ‘Melina Mercouri International Prize for the Safeguarding and Management of Cultural Landscapes’ (UNESCO 2007). The purpose of this award is to reward outstanding examples of action to preserve and enhance the world’s major cultural landscapes. Ganga Talao was awarded a special mention during the ceremony (UNESCO 2007).

1.2.3.3.2 Developing and managing the Festival

During the Festival, the Government of Mauritius organises the Maha Shivaratri Task Force to ensure that the welfare of pilgrims are not threatened (Dulthumun 2016). This committee is composed of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Health, the Central Electricity Board, the Central Water Authority, the Ministry of Arts and Culture, amongst others (Human Service Trust 2015; Le Mauricien 2015). The Government of Mauritius is mostly involved in the pilgrimage and it caters for public transport to Ganga Talao and regulates traffic (Eisenlohr 2004), as traffic during the Festival is voluminous due to the influx of people heading to and from the sacred lake. The Maha Shivaratri Task Force ensures that roads and pavements are in good conditions, that the lights are functioning and provides mobile toilets for the pilgrims at strategic places. During the Festival, the Mauritius Police Force deploys about 2000 police officers for the security of the pilgrims and for the management of traffic in and out of the site (Le Mauricien 2015).

The Maha Shivaratri Task Force also gets the help of socio-religious organisations to make the pilgrimage run smoothly (Dayal no date). In turn, the organisations are joined by volunteers to provide food and drink free of charge, toilet and bathing facilities, resting places, tents for shelter on the journey to and from the sacred lake and many others services. At the site, some socio-cultural organisations arrange the chanting of *kirtan* and *bhajans* for Lord Shiva (Dayal no date; Tiwari 2017). Others involved in the Festival include temples which provide tents (for pilgrims to rest) and many private individuals take upon themselves to provide their homes for pilgrims to rest and eat (Tiwari 2017). The houses and halls offered for resting are identified as these are decorated with pictures of Lord Shiva, flowers and leaves. Some individuals even choose to prepare food in their homes and distribute it to those stuck in traffic jams or waiting in the long queues outside temples (Tiwari 2017).

1.2.3.4 Tourism at Ganga Talao

Tourists visit the sacred site of Ganga Talao all year round. The site is a featured cultural attraction in Mauritius (Ramkissoon and Uysal 2011) and many tourists from neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Reunion Island participate in the Festival (Eisenlohr 2013). The site also attracts nearly 2,000 visitors, specifically those of the Hindu diaspora, from the following countries Canada, Fiji, Netherlands, South Africa, Trinidad, United Kingdom and United States of America, as stated by Dulthumun, the ex-President of the Mauritius Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation, in the souvenir magazine Festival 2016 launched by this Hindu organisation. The Festival is also featured on several local and international websites such as Expedia, CNN etc. as a means to attract tourists. The sacred site has also been progressively promoted to non-Hindu visitors for the Festival (Ramgoolam 2014). Notwithstanding the religious significance of the Festival, it is now viewed by Mauritians as a matter of pride (Ramgoolam 2014; Gurib-Fakim 2016).

1.3 THE RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

1.3.1 The academic context

This sub-section will highlight how the current research will address main gaps within the literature. As highlighted in Section 1.2.1, religion embodies a number of key features such as religious festivals, pilgrimages and sacred sites for the adherent to celebrate and practice their traditions, culture and belief. Whilst these features are very important for the disciples, it is also an 'asset' or 'commodity' for economic growth and externality benefits. That said, local religious festivals, pilgrimages and sacred sites embodied within a religion can be offered for 'sale' to be a tourist attractor for economic and externality benefits. These unique features of the religion can be developed and promoted to tourists by governments, entrepreneurs and cultural brokers. Some religious sites such as Lourdes in France, Kumbh Mela in India and Mecca in Saudi Arabia rely on the economic benefits in the form of increased income, employment and tax revenues (Shackley

2001; Olsen and Timothy 2006; Timothy 2011). While some governments (e.g. Cuba, Brazil and Thailand) have recognised the benefits of promoting and developing religious platforms to attract more tourists through commoditisation, others (e.g. Haiti and Trinidad) are less actively involved in this process (Hernandez-Ramdwar 2013). This is so, because such attempt can lead to the erosion and distortion of culture, traditions and sacredness (Olsen and Timothy 2006), thus contributing to deleterious effects on the local adherent's religious experiences.

In regard to Hindu pilgrimages, tourists are often perceived as changing traditional patterns and transforming pilgrims to tourists (Shinde 2008; Singh 2013; Aukland 2017). Some studies also show a growing concern over the increase in the number of tourists during festivals and the environmental and socioeconomic impacts this has on the community as well as the site (Shinde 2007). Such increase in the number of tourists/visitors during festivals, as pointed out by Kulkarni and Dhavalkar (2005), may lead to not only congestion but also the loss of human lives, for example in cases of stampede. An increase in the number of tourists during such religious events also indicates that there is likely to be, first, a higher demand for services, for example water supply, drainage and so on, and second, an increase pressure on the environment due to a rise in water and land pollution and land clearing to accommodate more facilities for tourists (Ahmed et al. 2000; Basheer 2003).

To explore such anticipated issues that might arise from an increase in the number of tourists at the Festival and site, the nub of this research is to explore the religious experiences offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri on the island to the local Hindu participants. The study will look at different levels of religious experiences, including the overall core, augmented and authentic religious experiences for the Festival. Next, it will seek to understand how commoditisation, through an increase in the number of tourists at the Festival and site, will potentially affect the religious experiences of the local Hindu participants and the challenges of maintaining the authenticity of the religious experiences for the Festival. Through this investigation, gaps within the literature will be addressed. Only three are highlighted here.

Firstly, there is a plethora of studies focusing on the visitors and religious tourism and their experiences at festivals, pilgrimages and sacred sites centred on the Christian denominations. Even though these phenomena have been studied in India in the Hindu religion, the existing literature is still open to more research on the experience sought and gained by followers pertaining to the Hindu religion. To address this gap, this research explores a religious festival, embodying a pilgrimage (either by walking or travelling through other means) to a sacred site to fetch the sacred water on the island of Mauritius. Secondly, there is a need to develop our understanding of the experiences offered by religious festivals and pilgrimages for the local adherents. The tourism, event and pilgrimage literature explore such topics from the tourist's perspectives and this research bridges such 'traditional' approach to explore the behaviour and attitudes of those participating in the Festival, in this case the local Hindu participants. Also, studies in the tourism field have looked

at festival experiences adopting models such as Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience economy framework and Kapferer's (1998) prism of brand identity. There is also an opportunity to explore other theoretical framework derived from the marketing literature, which this research sought to use and apply. Thirdly, limited research has been conducted in the religious tourism studies using mixed methods approach. To address such gap, this study adopts a mixed methods approach using both qualitative and quantitative research to explore the religious experiences offered by the Festival and the perceived effects of commoditisation the Festival and its site on the religious experiences for the local Hindu participants.

1.3.2 The applied context

The Government of Mauritius has envisaged developing and promoting cultural tourism in order to diversify the tourism portfolio to attract 2 million international tourists by 2020 (Ramkissoon and Uysal 2011; Tourism Tattler Trade Journal 2012). Over the years, governmental, private and religious organisations have promoted the Festival and its site for more tourists. One such organisation is the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) - which promotes Mauritius as a tourism destination - for instance, tourists are informed or made aware of the religious festival and site through the MTPA website (Tourism Tattler Trade Journal 2012; MTPA 2013) and other marketing medium such as brochures and visitor guides. Another private organisation operating seven hotels on the island of Mauritius has identified seven types of experiences which tourists can gain by participating in the Festival (Rogers 2018; Veranda Resorts Blog 2018). These experiences will be discussed in Section 8.3.3.1. Additionally, a spiritual park is under construction on a 16 acres land at the sacred site (Ramdhun et al. 2013; Hindu House 2019b). The goal of this project is to attract Mauritians and foreigners and use the spiritual park for conferences and religious discourses (Hindu House 2019b). Given that the Festival and its site represent the continuity of culture, belief, traditions and place identity for the local Hindu community, there is a growing concern that the commoditisation of the Festival and the sacred space may bring about possible challenges in maintaining the authenticity of the religious experiences and it may result in tensions between tourists and local Hindus.

From the literature, such attempts can affect the authenticity of the sacred sites and festivals and therefore cause a change in the meaning and relevance for the local community, affect their experiences, threaten the traditional culture and identity building, cause a loss of cultural uniqueness and downgrade local culture merely to a series of events and may also modify or destroy the authentic nature of places and cultures (Goulding 2000; Meethan 2001; Vukonić 2002; Hinch and Higham 2005; Richards 2007; Getz 2007; Kasim 2011; Bobot 2012; Qurashi 2017). Therefore, this calls for the need to ensure that the religious significance of the festivals or rituals and sites are preserved and maintained instead of being compromised by the presence of tourists (Butler and Suntikul 2018). Similarly, in this current research, two components of the Festival, in particular the journey to and from Ganga Talao and the visit to Ganga Talao, are more likely to be

affected by commoditisation, thus affecting the existential religious experiences for the local Hindu participants. Further research is therefore needed to investigate and explore how an increase in tourists attending a Hindu religious festival and/or pilgrimage may be perceived to impact on the social framework, thereby disrupting the local Hindu's belief, values, culture and identity; it may rather than trample over the religious experience of the local community. These changes can have serious repercussions on the belief systems and can in turn affect the religious and cultural values. The study of the outcomes of tourism development at religious sites and festivals, in particular upon the authenticity of religious experiences, is limited and therefore appropriate as there is a frequently expressed need to maintain, preserve and bolster the sanctity and authenticity of the sacred site and religious experiences.

1.3.3 Personal interest

The researcher is a Mauritian Hindu, hence having an interest in the Festival and its site. He has been linked with the site and Festival since childhood. Ever since he could remember, it was always a must to travel to the sacred site for several occasions, for instance on every 1st of January to seek blessings and on the Festival. This was inculcated from his parents. Participating in the Festival and undertaking prayers at the site is part of his identity and belief system. Over the years, the site has become a tourist attraction and the researcher has witnessed several problems. These include tourists drinking in the car park, making noise when local Hindus are carrying out their rituals, taking pictures when performing rites, thus acting as a 'voyeur' and not respecting the site. If the site and Festival are exploited further, this may affect Hindu identity and attachment to the site and Festival. The research will be a good base to provide recommendations to relevant stakeholders as to how the sanctity of the site and the religious experiences for the locals can be preserved without affecting their identity, belief and attachment to the sacredness.

1.4 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

1.4.1 The aim

The aim of this research is to critically evaluate the nature of the religious experiences offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri to the Mauritian Hindu participants and their perceptions of the possible impacts on these religious experiences resulting from any future commoditisation of the Festival and its site.

1.4.2 The objectives

1. To critically review academic literature in order to identify key factors that may potentially influence the nature of the religious experiences for a religious

festival, pilgrimage and at a sacred site. The review, covering the nature of the experiences, authenticity and commoditisation, is to act as a guide to the primary research and the subsequent interpretation of the findings.

2. To identify and explore the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities as to what they perceive to constitute and influence the religious experiences and the authenticity sought by the Mauritian Hindu participants from the Festival.
3. To identify and explore the views of Mauritian Hindus who had participated in the Festival as to what constitutes and influences their religious experiences and the authenticity of those experiences arising from their participation in the Festival.
4. To determine the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities, the 'Public Sector' organisations and the Mauritian Hindus who had attended the festival on the potential commoditisation of the Festival and its site (by using the Festival and its site to increase the number of tourists visiting Mauritius) and the potential impacts on the religious experiences of Mauritian Hindus participating in the Festival and its site.
5. To undertake a critical evaluation synthesising the literature and the qualitative and quantitative research findings to underpin a conceptual framework that furthers our understanding of the perceived effects of commoditisation on the core, augmented and authenticity of the religious experiences.

1.5 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of nine chapters.

Chapter 1, Introduction, predominantly sets out the context of the research and the Festival under investigation. It begins by providing a background of the political, economic and social context of Mauritius and the Mauritian society and then provides a description of the Festival and its four components. This is followed by the rationales for the study explaining the academic, applied and personal reasons for undertaking this particular study. It concludes by presenting the aim and objectives guiding the research.

Chapter 2, Literature review, consists of five main sections. It relates to the key concepts and the theoretical frameworks that underpin the research. It starts by giving an overview of what is Hinduism and the significance of festivals, pilgrimages and sacred sites in the Hindu religion. It then critically evaluates the literature in relation to how a festival can be viewed as a product by

synthesising the nature of experience and the three levels of a product in order to understand festival as a product experience. This is followed by a debate on authenticity of experience and commoditisation of experience. It ends with a conceptualisation, developed from the literature review, to guide the research foci.

Chapter 3, Methodology, outlines the aim and objectives of this research followed by an overview and use of stakeholder theory in this research stating briefly the three sets of stakeholders involved in the study. It then moves to the research methods adopted for the research, explaining the use of a mixed methods strategy as an appropriate method for the study. The research adopted a sequential stage approach, Stage One was an exploratory exercise conducted through semi-structured face-to-face interviews with twelve Hindu Mauritian expatriates living in the United Kingdom who had attended the Festival at least once within the last 10 years. Stages Two and Three were the main data collection conducted in Mauritius. Stage Two involved in-depth face-to-face interviews with eleven key informants who represented a range of religious and secular organisations that were/are involved in the development and management of the Festival. Stage Three involved a quantitative survey for the Mauritian Hindu residents who had attended the festival. In addition to providing the data collection as well as the data analysis techniques, this chapter also includes the ethical issues and limitations of this study.

Chapter 4, entitled ‘**Perceptions of the Mauritian religious authorities in respect of the core and the augmented religious experiences offered by the Festival**’, is the first of the qualitative findings. It provides an in-depth understanding of what the eight representatives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA), comprising both the ‘on-site’ religious authorities (ORA) and the ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisations (ORO), involved in delivering, managing and advising on the Festival, consider being the religious significance of the Festival for the participants and the local Hindu community. From the lenses of the RAs, it also critically explores the overall core and augmented religious experiences for the participants during the Festival.

Chapter 5, titled ‘**The activities performed by local Hindu residents and their religious experiences during the Festival**’, is the first quantitative chapter. It explores the participation characteristics of the local Hindu residents in terms of when they last participated in the Festival, who they participated with and their reasons for participation. Next, it investigates the *actual religious experiences* experienced by the Hindu residents and their behaviour while participating in the four components of the Festival (the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja). A total of 412 useable questionnaires form the basis of the analysis of both the quantitative *Chapters 5 and 7*.

Chapter 6, named ‘**Perceptions of the Mauritian Authorities on the authenticity of religious experiences and the possible outcomes from commoditising the Festival**’ is the second of the qualitative chapters. It uses the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA), both the ‘on-

site' religious authorities (ORA) and the 'off-site' religious-cultural organisations (ORO), and the Public Sector' organisations (PS) on the authentic religious experiences of the Mauritian participants in the Festival as well as on the perceived possible outcomes of the impacts of developing the Festival and sacred site, Ganga Talao, in order to increase the number of tourists not of the Hindu faith in respect of the authenticity of the religious experiences. In doing so, it identifies the authenticity of the religious experiences for the local Hindu community and participants which, if lost or changed significantly, would have a significant detrimental impact on their religious experiences. It then presents the findings of the views of the RA and the PS on the possible impacts on promoting and developing the Festival and its site for more tourists not of the Hindu faith, the perceived outcomes of an increased number of these tourists on the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* at the Festival and its site, and the possible outcomes/broader impacts that may result from such development of the Festival.

Chapter 7, entitled '**The attitudes of Mauritian Hindu residents on the authenticity and commoditisation of the Festival and site**', is the second of the quantitative chapters. It focuses on identifying the authentic character of the Festival, as perceived by the local Hindu residents. It then looks at the residents' attitudes towards the commoditisation of the site, and of the Festival, upon their religious experiences and the trade-off between the benefits and the undesirable consequences resulting from an increase in the number of tourists.

Chapter 8, Discussion, presents the discussion for the qualitative and quantitative findings from *Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7*. It critically reviews and discusses the key research findings in terms of similarities and differences in the attitudes of the different stakeholders - the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA), the local Hindu residents and the 'Public Sector' organisations (PS) - in the light of previous theories, research and practices from the existing literature.

Chapter 9, Conclusion, denotes the final chapter. It concludes this Thesis by reviewing the gaps in the literature and underlining how the research meets the aim and objectives identified in *Chapter 1*. It then sets out the academic, knowledge and practical contributions of this research. This chapter also outlines the limitations and the potential future areas of research.

1.6 CONCLUSION

This study aims to critically evaluate the nature of the religious experiences offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri to Mauritian Hindu participants and their perceptions of the possible impacts on these religious experiences resulting from any future commoditisation of the Festival and its site. This chapter provides the background and context of this research. Firstly, it provides an overview of the political, economic and social context of Mauritius and Mauritian society. In doing so, it helps to establish key external factors that would potentially influence the way the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) is managed and delivered to

the Hindu participants. Secondly, the background of the Festival and its four components are introduced. This helps to develop our understanding as to how the Festival is celebrated by the local Hindu community and the importance attached to the sacred site. Thirdly, the rationale of the study is briefly discussed in terms of the academic and applied contexts as well as the personal interests of this topic for the researcher. As there is a possible attempt by the Government of Mauritius and other organisations to commoditise the Festival and its site for more tourists, there is a growing concern that this may bring about possible challenges in maintaining the authenticity of the religious experiences and the sanctity and sacredness of the site.

The next chapter, the literature review, will critically explore existing literature to identify gaps and opportunities and the theoretical underpinnings relevant to this research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to critically evaluate the nature of the religious experiences offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) to the Mauritian Hindu participants and their perceptions of the possible impacts on these religious experiences resulting from any future commoditisation of the Festival and its site. To assist in the achievement of this aim, *Chapter 2* provides critical insights into existing literature which is relevant to and underpins the research. In doing so, this chapter, consisting of five key sections, helps to identify gaps and opportunities in the literature and the theoretical frameworks relevant to the current study.

First, Section 2.2 sets the context of this study. It uses Smart's (1996, 1998) model of religion to provide an understanding of the nature of the Hindu religion. This is followed by a review of the literature on religious festivals, pilgrimages and sacred spaces paying attention to those associated with Hinduism.

Next, Section 2.3 provides an overview of the literature on experiences whilst putting emphasis on religious experiences. It seeks to establish a theoretical foundation of religious experiences for the purpose of this research and develop an underlying theoretical framework to guide understanding of the nature of the religious experiences sought and gained by the local adherents during the Festival. A marketing approach has been adopted based on Levitt's (1981) typology and Kotler's (1994) conceptualisation of the product levels.

Third, Section 2.4 explores existing studies and research, within the tourism literature, on the authenticity of experiences. Recognising the contested nature of the concept of authenticity amongst tourism scholars, this exploration focuses on three of the four main types of authenticity proposed by Wang (1999) and considers experiencing sacred space as part of existential authenticity.

Fourth, Section 2.5 examines the literature on local hosts' attitudes and perceptions on the positive and negative implications of commoditisation resulting from the promotion and development of tourism. A range of examples are reviewed to reveal how tourism development may impact on their overall religious experiences.

Finally, Section 2.6 sets out the conceptual frameworks that underpin the specification of the foci of the data collection in this study. The frameworks are based on theoretical underpinnings established through the literature review.

2.2 RELIGION

2.2.1 An overview of religion

Religion is an individual and a social phenomenon (McGuire 2002). On the one hand, religion may influence an individual's choice of food, dress and site of worship in his/her private life (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004) and, on the other hand, it influences his/her social life thereby shaping relationship with others as well as influencing the economy, family and political life (McGuire 2002). Thus, religion can be viewed as being both pervasive and imperative in human life (Smart 1969; Newman and Graham 2018).

There is a plethora of literature on the concept of religion across different fields of study, and an ongoing debate on its meaning and innumerable attempts at defining the term 'religion' (Neitz and Spickard 1990; Furseth and Repstad 2006; Raj and Morpeth 2007; Raj and Griffin 2015). There is no simple or single definition (Raj and Morpeth 2007). However, Smart (1996) has set out seven dimensions of religion which focus on the belief systems such as worshipping and other meaningful activities pertaining to the religion and not on whether God exists or not, that is its validity. These are used below in the explanation of Hinduism, the religion that is the catalyst for the Festival studied in this thesis.

2.2.2 Hinduism

2.2.2.1 *The seven dimensions of Hindu religion*

Hinduism is one of the oldest surviving religions and dates back to almost 5000 Before Common Era (Singh 2006). It is among the top five mainstream religions accounting for 15% of the world's population (World Factbook 2018). It is a mixture of "*religious beliefs, doctrines and attitudes toward life, rites-rituals and cults, moral and social norms, and so-much-so interrelated activities and resultant counter-activities*" (Singh 2014, p.1). Adherents of the Hindu faith believe that there is no unique founder or religious leader (Hammer 1987; Singh 2014; Pandia 2017) and neither is there one holy book nor a fixed set of dogma (Davidson and Gitlitz 2002; Singh 2014). In fact, Hinduism can be seen more as a culture rather than a faith (Hammer 1987) and Hindus are highly tolerant to those of other faiths (Pandia 2017).

As noted above, Smart (1996, 1998) has proposed seven dimensions of religion and these are set out and discussed below in relation to the Hindu religion.

- * The doctrinal and philosophical dimension: This dimension is concerned with the beliefs and teachings of the religion. It essentially provides explanations for

several practices and ideology of a religion. The four legitimate goals of life for a Hindu include the doctrinal and philosophical concepts of (1) *dharma* which relates to the righteous deeds such as proper action and ethics, (2) *artha* is concerned with the material well-being gained through honest means, (3) *kama* is about fulfilling the desires and pleasures and (4) *moksha* relates to the liberation from the birth and rebirth cycle (Hawley and Narayanan 2006; Whaling 2009; Flueckiger 2015; Smith 2016). These sets of beliefs, values, traditions and teachings were brought along by the Indian descendants (those of the Hindu faith) when they migrated to Mauritius and have been passed on from generation to generation for at least two centuries. To date, the Hindus continue to perpetuate and maintain their belief system and traditional practices (Rambachan and Shukla 2016).

* The practical and ritual dimension: This is how a religion expresses itself in the form of regular practices. Those of the Hindu faith carry out *Pooja*, prayers, either at home or in a temple. While the latter is not mandatory (Whaling 2009; Flueckiger 2015) as compared to Muslim men praying on Friday in the mosque, worshipping at home is crucial for Hindus (Whaling 2009). Hindu households can have an area for worshipping or a shrine that is embellished with idols or pictures of different deities (Smith 2016). In Hinduism, worshipping may basically consist of lighting lamps, burning incense sticks and making offerings such as water, flowers or food to the God (Smith 2016). In the temple, a person faces the statue of the deity so that he/she sees the God and receives blessings from Him. This is an important process known as *darshana*, that is to see and to be seen (Whaling 2009; Smith 2016) when carrying out rituals in the temple (Flueckiger 2015). Similarly, Mauritian Hindus manifest their traditional practices in festivals (for example Maha Shivaratri and Diwali), daily or periodic worshipping, rites of passage including wedding, birth and death as well as other religious observance conducted with acquaintance (Rambachan and Shukla 2016).

* The narrative or mythic dimension: Every religion is based on stories which are crucial and may be sacred for the pious. Firstly, the narrative is concerned with the holy books or historical events which make individuals believe in traditional meanings. In Hinduism, there are four types of holy texts namely the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Ramayana* and *Bhagavad Gita*. Each text gives an insight into the meaning of the divine and shares the truth with those who believe in it (Davidson and Gitlitz 2002). For example, one of the exploits of *Lord Shiva*, the Supreme Being of the cosmos in the Hindu Pantheon, is his courageous act of drinking a lethal poison which came out during the churning of the sea that would have destroyed humankind (Pattanaik 2012). Basically, these stories inspire and

consolidate the belief of the disciples. Secondly, the myth relates to something that cannot be proven scientifically and it challenges logical explanations. From Section 1.2.3.2.3, it was seen that Pandit Jhummon Giri Napal Gossagne made recurrent dreams about a lake whose water was connected to the Ganges River in India. In his dreams, he saw fairies dancing on an island situated in the middle of the lake. He then set out to find this lake along with some friends (Sewtohul and Ramdin 2012; Sewtohul 2014). This mythical journey leads to the first Hindu pilgrimage on the island of Mauritius. Thereafter, local Hindus and many followers of Lord Shiva march to and/or from Ganga Talao for the Festival.

* The ethical or legal dimension: This dimension relates to the ethics that the adherents follow and their associated behaviour. It guides them to follow customs, norms and morals. In doing so, the followers are promoting and honouring the religious values, traditions and duties. In the Hindu religion, the cow is a potent symbol (Smith 2016) and Hindus treat them as sacred and refrain from consuming beef (Jha 2014). In addition, the ethical dimension constitutes laws that influence tradition (Smart 1998). It is a belief in the Hindu religion that one's past deeds, including previous lives, determines our present and that our present deeds have a bearing on one's future, extending to any future lives one may live; this is known as *karma*. In regard to the Festival, from the preparation to the Char Pahar ki Pooja, the devotees fast (see Section 1.2.3.2). Such religious observance is a common practice for local Hindus at the times of religious ceremonies or prayers (Rambachan and Shukla 2016). For instance, Ramkissoon (2015) observed that during the Diwali festival, Mauritians of the Hindu faith refrain from eating meat and carry out other specific religious activities pertaining to the Hindu religion. Although fasting differs from individual to individual, it is a dogma based on moral convictions and disciplines undertaken during religious ceremonies as well as a means to be self-purified and to show one's devotion toward the deity.

* The social and institutional dimension: This is about understanding how a faith operates with people. It seeks to understand the belief systems and attitudes of the followers. Within this dimension, the behaviour and belief of the followers come to life when they are gathered in communities based on their credos to either propagate or protect these beliefs. For instance, the congregation of Hindus in a temple at Ganga Talao to take part in the Char Pahar ki Pooja, one of the four components of the Festival, can play a crucial part within the socialisation of the religion. The Hindus get together and carry out rituals in the temple. As a result, they have the opportunity to have collective experiences and demonstrate their religious and social identity. Furthermore, discussion on the caste system, also

referred as the *Varna*, which can be seen as a social structure or a method of socio-religious stratification (Claveyrolas 2015) in the Hindu religion, is currently a taboo subject as it has been for many years. This reality is supported by Smith (2016) who stated that in modernity although caste sits uncomfortably in the Hindu religion, it plays a significant part in Hindu life and society. Literally, *Varna* means ‘colour’ and there are four ideal groupings or classifications within, namely the *Brahmin* (priests/scholars/teachers), *Kshatriyas* (warriors/rulers), *Vaishyas* (merchants/artisans/traders), *Shudras* (peasants/labourers/servants) (Hawley and Narayanan 2006; Whaling 2009; Flueckiger 2015; Smith 2016) and the untouchables or outcastes (Hawley and Narayanan 2006; Smith 2016). A person’s caste (*Jaiti*, literally means ‘what were you born?’) has a major influence on his/her occupation, marriage (Smith 2016) as well as his/her involvement in the society through his/her status (Whaling 2009).

* The material dimension relates to the physical form of people’s faith. This can be depicted in numerous forms and can have symbolic and sacramental significance. For example, structures such as Christian churches, Hindu temples and Muslim mosques, the representation of images of Lord Shiva pictures or the *linga*, symbols such as the cross and crucifix for Christians and the *OM* symbol for Hindus and natural features such as Ganges River and the Ganga Talao. God and Goddesses are considered as being alive in temples and shrines as well as in domestic shrines at home (Flueckiger 2015; Smith 2016). In addition, the architectures of temples may vary according to the layouts, the sacred text directions or region due to the weather conditions/materials used (Flueckiger 2015). In Mauritius, the Hindu community is divided into different linguistic groups (see Section 1.2.2.4). These differences can even appear on the varieties of temples built across the island (Rambachan and Shukla 2016). Additionally, several international religious organisations, including ISKCON, Sathya Sai International organisation and Ramakrishna Mission, whose affiliation are from India have religious centres over the country that attract several disciples. At Ganga Talao, the sacred site features three temples which welcome thousands of participants during the Festival.

* The experiential and emotional dimension: It refers to the emotional and subjective side of the religion, including a variety of religious feelings for example during rituals or services, or a pilgrimage and while attending a religious festival. People feel differently at a given time or a specific place and so are their emotions and experiences. In a temple, the *darshana* experience can be shaped through the ambience, listening to mantras and ringing bells, and the smells of the burning incense sticks (Flueckiger 2015). While these could be meaningful and

numinous experiences for some, it could be meaningless for others with no awe factors. This is fundamental to understanding a tradition and the resulting feelings generated (Smart 1998). Another example depicting this dimension is the resulting experiences or emotions when undertaking a pilgrimage. The pilgrimage may involve hardship in the form of pain, exhaustion and even injury (Lulk 2012); this austerity may itself represent a religious experience. This experience of hardship shows the sacrifice of the adherents and is a vital part of the pilgrimage (Frey 1998). It also teaches them not only the potential and limitations of their body, but also the respect for the needs of their body (Lulk 2012).

Although the literature does not offer a concise definition of religion, the seven dimensions of Smart's (1996, 1998) model were used in this study to develop an understanding of the nature of Hinduism.

2.2.2.2 *The varieties of religious belief*

This sub-section provides context on the varieties of religious belief and experience, paying particular attention to the Hindu belief system (that is the religious practices and beliefs pertaining to Hinduism). Scholars and researchers often conceptualise religion as a set of practices, proscriptions and beliefs that shape the thoughts, attitudes and behaviours of people. Religious practices, teachings and beliefs help to identify the self with others, give meaning to their lives and foster a sense of unity.

There are diverse beliefs in every society in regard to non-human agents, supernatural entities, immaterial essences, etc. Although in the Western context people have high regard to God, they may have diverse views on non-human agents across religious traditions; this may include saints, spirits, deities, angels, demons, amongst other (Johnson et al. 2015). Also, differences may exist among people of the same religious belief on a particular agent. For example, some Muslims may consider God to be 'person-like' whilst others may believe that He is absolute and beyond belief (Glasse 1989/2002; Johnson et al. 2015). Similarly, the Hindu belief system and practices are diverse in that no one worldview can be held by all Hindus and it is not possible to define the term 'Hindu belief structure' (Warrier 2007).

Hinduism is an inclusive religion with the followers believing that "all religions are paths to the same goal" (Singh 2013, p.9). The Hindu belief system differs from other religions as it has no guru, messiah or prophet; instead, according to the Hindu traditions, the Universe was formed and knowledge about it was created simultaneously (Singh 2013). In turn, *Rishis*, or Seers, who gained this knowledge, recorded it in the *Vedas* which provides guidelines of leading a harmonious life (Singh 2013). In addition to the *Vedas*, two great epics, namely the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* inspire and direct the way of life of a Hindu (Bhalla 2012). Both demonstrate dharma (religious

duty) in practice, through the complexities of relationships and the difficulties of following everything that dharma dictates.

The most commonly used word in Hindu texts is *dharma*, which itself has a wide range of meaning; it encompasses responsibility, duty, law, morality and religion (Rinehart 2004). *Dharma* involves several concepts, for instance how a society is to be organised, what someone ought or ought not to eat, and so on. In other words, a Hindu is guided by dharma. Although Hindus respect and revere sacred texts, their context may have little connection with what their practices are and what they believe in (Rinehart 2004). What is more important for the Hindus is to engage in traditional practices, more so than to believe in a specific doctrine, although the doctrine has its importance, as the religious practices help to connect individuals to the world at large; the goal of these practices being to uncover one's true identity (Rinehart 2004).

Other popular beliefs introduced by the Hindu texts are the concepts of *karma* and *samsara* (Rinehart 2004). *Karma* relates to "an act", which, if good will lead to good results and if bad will lead to bad results, in this lifetime or the next. *Samsara* refers to the cycle of death and rebirth, with one's *karma* determining whether one's rebirth will be in a better or worst state. The majority of Hindus believe in *karma* and *samsara* and this in turn has broader social implications for the Hindu society in general (Rinehart 2004). The ultimate goal on a spiritual level is not simply to do good actions and secure a rebirth in a better state, but it is to secure *moksha*, release from the cycle of *samsara*, through inner discipline, detachment from worldly affairs and spiritual enlightenment (Warrier 2007). The notion of discipline and spiritual enlightenment is linked to the notion of *Atman*, the individual self (Warrier 2007). On the realisation of the *Atman* being one with the universe, one can experience bliss and infinitude, thereby securing release from *Samsara*; this is known as self-realisation (Warrier 2007). Another path to liberation to secure release from the cycle is through *bhakti*, devotion for a god or goddess through religious practices of worshipping in temples, carrying out rituals of worship at home or even venerating a god or goddess during a festival (Warrier 2007). *Bhakti* is founded on the belief that there is divine power in everything, and that it can be experienced through emotions and senses (Warrier 2007). Although no single religious experience can be gained by the Hindus, given the great arrays of beliefs and practices, religious experience is a means to understand life as being worthwhile and meaningful (McDaniel 2019). Religion offers an individual the opportunity to have such religious experiences, including the experience of one's true sense of self or a sense of belonging. Such feelings can generally be manifested in festivals and pilgrimages, which hold a central place in the lives of many followers of different religion around the globe. This is also true to Hindu belief system.

Some beliefs held by the Hindus are similar to those held by the Christians. For instance, Christians also believe that there is life after death (BBC 2009). Although the nature of their current life may be unknown, Christians believe that the spiritual experiences they gain in this lifetime may give them an insight into what eternal life would be like (BBC 2009). Another similarity is that

Christians also undertake prayers and rituals as a means to communicate with God. Pilgrimages are also common for Christians, for instance these may be carried out to where Jesus was born, or where He lived, where He was crucified and where He was resurrected. Additional similarities are that both Hinduism and Christianity hold great importance to the Trinity, although the Trinity differs in its meaning. For Christians, the belief is that; God is one, who is at the same time the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (BBC 2011). For the Hindus, the three principal gods include Brahma (creator of the universe), Vishnu (preserver of the Universe) and Shiva (destroyer of the Universe); this is known as the Trimurti (BBC 2003; Britannica 2015).

2.2.2.3 The varieties of religious experience

James (1902/1985, p. 34), the author of the book ‘The Varieties of Religious Experience’, defined religion as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine”. This author’s book focusses on instances which give rise to religious experience, for instance God’s presence, mysticism, conversion; the focus being on personal experiences as opposed to rituals within a religion. In some traditions (Christian, Islamic and Jewish), God - as a good spirit, eternal and supreme - is the object of the religious experiences whereas in others (Hinduism and Buddhism), the object of the religious experience may differ as it may be based on a fact or reality (Webb 2017).

On a personal level, religious experiences may be both objective and religious and can vary from tradition to tradition (Webb 2017). This means that the nature of religious experiences sought and gained by an individual would vary from person to person, even if they share similar religious traditions. Although there is a range of religious experiences in the literature, scholars consider that the term religious experience lacks operationalisation, conceptualisation and measurement (Baker 2009). Yandell (1993) categorised religious experiences into five based on its content: nature experience, monotheistic experience, nirvanic experience (enlightenment experiences linked to Buddhism), kevalic experience (experiences of enlightenment linked to Jainism) and moksha experience (experiences based on the release from karma and the cycle of rebirth, linked to Hinduism).

James (1902) considered that religious experience is existential and relates to the mystical experiences based on consciousness. Mystical experiences can be characterised as ineffable (experience which cannot be fully described), transient (experiences occurring over a brief period), noetic (experiences which feel real) and passive (experiences which are not in the control of the person experiencing it). Mystical experiences can alter people’s consciousness in terms of how they assess time and space (James 1902; MacLean et al. 2012; Yaden et al. 2017). At times, these experiences can occur without someone seeking them (Webb 2017). For example, in the present context, several miraculous event/manifestations are claimed to have occurred at the sacred site of

Ganga Talao in Mauritius. Once it was claimed that the Islet in the sacred lake took the shape of a crocodile during a religious ceremony for Goddess Ganga (Dayal no date). Such happenings are unsought experiences. According to James (1902), religious experiences have repercussions on people's lives and on societies at large, and therefore it is more plausible to attribute the occurrences of religious experiences to a real God rather than these being attributed to hallucinations. Religious experiences are also attached to emotions (love, hate, hope, fear, joy, sorrow and so on).

2.2.2.4 *Research on religion in Mauritius*

This sub-section provides an overall perspective of the main results of research undertaken in Mauritius on religion. Mauritius is a multi-cultural and pluri-ethnic diversified society; the three main religious and ethnic groups being the Hindus, Christians and Muslims (see Section 1.2.2; Bissoonauth 2011). Religion plays a salient part in the local political system as well as in the lives and behaviours of the Mauritian people (Soper 2007; Ramtohul 2015; BTI 2018). The Hindu community, numerically the largest group on the island, is fragmented by the caste system and linguistic groups (Ng Tseung-Wong and Verkuyten 2013; Ramtohul 2015; BTI 2018). Each ethnic group within the Hindu community has assigned public holidays to celebrate their own cultures and identity. On the one hand, the Christians, predominantly Catholics, are separated by virtue of the people's race and ethnicity, such as Creoles, Whites and Chinese. On the other hand, even though Muslims are segregated from their Islamic traditions and social classes, they are clustered round their faith and are characterised as being 'ethnically homogenous' (Eisenlohr 2006; Ng Tseung-Wong and Verkuyten 2013). Mauritians share dual identities, considering one as being only a 'Mauritian' is challenging (Ng Tseung-Wong and Verkuyten 2013). In the research conducted by Ng Tseung-Wong and Verkuyten (2013) on Mauritian adolescents of the Hindu, Christian and Muslims faith, the results showed that religious identity is more important than national identity. More specifically, the adolescents expressed a stronger sense of belonging to their religious community.

In fact, in Mauritius, religious beliefs and practices offer moral values that in turn foster peace and tolerance (Eisenlohr 2013; Ng Tseung-Wong and Verkuyten 2013). Eisenlohr (2013) considers that religion that is practiced in Mauritius provides an impetus to good citizenship and therefore the Government of Mauritius has to encourage and nurture ancestral cultures. In a study conducted by Soper (2007) on developing Mauritianness and cultural heritage tourism, the author found that the religious beliefs of Mauritians and national identity should be separated. She considers that religion, for the local people, shapes their self-identity. One would be a 'true' Mauritian if he/she is born in Mauritius and speaks the Kreol language; two statements being 'very important' for the participants in Soper's (2007) study.

Language within the Mauritian context is a key determinant of ethnicity for those of the Hindu faith (Sambajee 2015). Apart from Kreol, Bhojpuri, a Hindi dialect, is used by some Hindus in Mauritius. This dialect was used by indentured labourers and it is spoken by Indian living in the western part of Bihar and the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh (Sambajee 2015). Basically, ancestral languages (for example Hindi, Tamil, Marathi, Urdu and Mandarin) represent one's ethnoreligious identity as well as a diasporic link to where our ancestors came from (Eisenlohr 2013; Owodally 2014). English and French used since the colonial period still play a dominant role in the Mauritian society, such as local media and education system (see Section 1.2.2). The arrival of the Indian descendants after the abolition of slavery to Mauritius has led to major changes in the linguistic and demographic landscape of Mauritius (see Section 1.2.2; Eisenlohr 2004). These immigrants (Hindus and Muslims) brought along their cultural idioms, religious observances, rites and rituals, and languages and ensured that these stay alive and are transferred to the next generation.

Over the years, ancestral language took a new path. Those speaking the Hindi and Urdu languages were identified as either Hindus or Muslims respectively, thus leading to either a similar or distinct ethnoreligious identity (Eisenlohr 2006, 2007; Owodally 2014). Since the introduction of free education in Mauritius, the Government of Mauritius has promoted ancestral languages in schooling both at primary and secondary levels (Bissoonauth 2011; Eisenlohr 2013). However, these ancestral languages are now mainly used by the older generations and are gradually fading among the younger generations (Bissoonauth 2011). Not only are both French and Kreol languages replacing these ancestral languages at home but ancestral languages are perceived to be less useful and preferred in this new technological epoch by the younger generations (Bissoonauth 2011). Such loss may have repercussions on the disposition, ethno-religious identities and community belonging of the younger generations. Additionally, this may affect the way they perceive religion as religious ceremonies and performances are normally conducted in ancestral languages (Sonck 2005; Eisenlohr 2013). For instance, Hindi language is a key feature in many religious performances and activities during the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Eisenlohr 2013). For instance, pilgrims listen to and sing religious songs and religious representatives and politicians deliver speeches in Hindi. As a result, the use of the ancestral language in the Festival reduces the diasporic gap and reinforces cultural links (Eisenlohr 2013). Overall, religion and heritage, in Mauritius, are considered to be inextricable (Eisenlohr 2013).

2.2.3 Festivals

2.2.3.1 The role of festivals in society

This sub-section neither tries to dismantle the various definitions and typologies of events by different scholars nor does it seek to develop our understanding on the types of festivals in terms of their nature, size and purposes. It simply provides a basic overview of what a festival is and the reasons why people participate in a festival, including religious festivals.

Festivals and events have played a significant role in human society. According to Falassi (1987), the word ‘festival’ is derived from the Latin words *‘festum’* and *‘feira’*. These words relate to festive happenings where *‘festum’* is about public enjoyment, the playful and jolly while *‘feira’* relates to non-attendance at work to honour the Gods (Falassi 1987; Jaeger and Mykletun 2013). During a festival, an individual does something he/she will not normally do in his/her normal daily life and/or will refrain from doing something he/she usually does (Falassi 1987). In addition, a festival is a social occasion and a time of celebration to mark special happenings (Falassi 1987; Jaeger and Mykletun 2013). Members of the community get together by virtue of their ethnicity, linguistic and religious roots, and historical connection (Falassi 1987). Ultimately, all types of festivals may act as a catalyst to create opportunities for socialisation and build community cohesion. As a result, festivals help in developing a sense of community (Fu et al. 2014) with those sharing similar values in the society (Stoeltje 1992) and in creating collective conception. It is therefore an inevitable outcome of social life (Winthrop 1991).

There are various reasons why festivals today are organised by communities; these may include promoting their city and cultural heritage or the continuity of a community, celebrating their identity, ideologies, values and traditions, maintaining their wellbeing and improving their quality of life (Nolan and Nolan 1992; Getz 2005 2008; Cudny et al. 2012; Ferdinand and Williams 2013; Jepson and Clarke 2016; Smith 2016; Jepson and Clarke 2018). Also, festivals create economic as well as externality benefits for the host communities such as increasing employment, business opportunities, tax revenues for governments and financial returns, stimulating economic development and urban regeneration, promoting place marketing, the visitor economy and tourism in terms of expenditures and stay, building local pride and nation building, and constructing new infrastructure and facilities (Delamere and Hinch 1994; Crompton and McKay 1994; Uysal and Gitelson 1994; Besculides et al. 2002; Thrane 2002; Getz 2003; Timothy and Boyd 2006; Page and Connell 2012; Ferdinand and Williams 2013; Prayag et al. 2013; Trono 2016; Yolal et al. 2016). Religious festivals are no exception to these anticipated economic and externality advantages.

2.2.3.2 Religious festivals and their symbolic meanings

Throughout their history, festivals have been closely linked to religion (Pieper 1999) and have had religious connections often related to religious rituals or services/rites (Falassi 1987; Jaeger and Mykletun 2013; Smith 2016) and such festivals form part of almost all mainstream religions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. In general, festivals, and religious festivals alike, exhibit ‘core’ characteristics in terms of the celebrations being temporary in nature and taking place within a timescale. However, there are other auxiliary attributes that form parts of these festivals. For example, social events/gatherings as well as cultural performances can boost the festive fervour (Shinde 2010, 2015).

While religious festivals have strong symbolic meanings, these may also have strong religious, social and cultural significance. In particular, religious festivals represent the continuity of cultures, practices, performances, traditions, beliefs, faith and the preservation of one's identity (Hughes et al. 2013; Liutikas 2014; Shinde 2015; Ramkissoon 2015; Fernandes et al. 2016). By undertaking activities associated to a particular religious festival, for instance rituals and symbolic practices, group members are easily identified. These activities in turn help to bind people together, and, as Eade and Sallnow (2000) and Sepp (2014) have identified, are occasions to demonstrate collective consciousness.

Festivals in Hinduism are a means to commemorate the births or marriages of deities and to entreat the Hindu Gods and Goddesses (Flueckiger 2015). These are designed and celebrated according to the Hindu calendar. Each festival is distinct in terms of its content. More precisely, the festivals have specific narratives, myths and rituals, songs and foods related to them (Flueckiger 2015). Some of the major Hindu festivals include the *Khumba Mela* which is renowned as the world's largest religious and human gatherings that take place every twelve years attracting over 20 million people in India, the *Maha Shivaratri* is the Great night of Lord Shiva that takes place in either February or March, the *Diwali* is recognised as the festival of lights that take place either late October or early November, the *Navaratri* is known as the 'nine nights' of Goddess amongst others. All of these major Hindu religious festivals are celebrated outside India with the exception of the *Khumba Mela*.

In Mauritius, several festivals of different nature and scales are celebrated throughout the year by Mauritians of various religious and ethnic backgrounds. These festivals have been adopted by the early/first ancestors who migrated to Mauritius, thus allowing them to practice their cultural idioms, belief and faith that were inherited from their former motherlands (Ramdoyal 1994). Today, festivals form part of the rich and diversified Mauritian religious and cultural heritage/society. It is practically impossible to do justice to all Mauritian festivals in this section. Apart from the festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival), other major Hindu religious festivals include the Cavadee, Ganesh Chaturthi and Diwali (Republic of Mauritius 2019). Each of these festivals has their religious significance and meanings for the local Hindu community. Among all these main local Hindu festivals, Diwali is another special Hindu festival that brings about a sentiment of merriment (Seewoochurn 1995; Republic of Mauritius 2019). For this festival, cakes are cooked and offered to the deities and then shared with family members, friends and neighbours as well as in the form of donation to the hospitals or charitable organisations (Seewoochurn 1995). As with the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri, the Diwali festival is a public holiday. Like many houses on the island, district and village council building in rural areas and municipalities in urban areas are adorned with electric lights (Seewoochurn 1995; Ramkissoon 2015). In addition, the public spaces (village/district councils and municipalities) are used for special events/activities such as fireworks and concerts. A mood of joy and mirth is shed all over the island for the Diwali celebration. Today, this aforementioned festival is not only celebrated by the Hindu community but

by people of other ancestral origins in Mauritius, thus making Diwali a national event that fosters a sense of community identity (Ramkissoon 2015). According to Seewoochurn (1995), some churches even take this opportunity to celebrate a mass. On the one hand, Diwali, for Hindus, is about celebrating their disposition, ancestral cultures and traditions and belief system. On the other hand, for Mauritians as a whole, Diwali triggers social and educational experiences and foster a belief of 'oneness' and tolerance. Nevertheless, other religious and non-religious festivals dominate the Mauritian landscape and exhibit similar characteristics, for instance Chinese Spring festival, Christmas and Holi.

The Government of Mauritius continues to support religious freedom as a democratic right and to safeguard cultural values for the local people. Like the Diwali, the Government of Mauritius organises cultural activities for Mauritians to attend and encourages local religious authorities to create awareness of the significance of the festivals for the public at large, a step towards better understanding the festivals and bolstering tolerance and mutual respect (Ramdoyal 1994; Ministry of Arts and Culture 2019).

While some religious festivals in the Hindu religion are celebrated domestically, others which involve religious performances and practices, such as rites, rituals and worshipping, take place in temples. In addition, large processions are also embodied in many religious festivals (Flueckiger 2015). These allow an individual to bond with their family, friends and celebrants, to reaffirm his/her identity, to transmit and maintain long existing cultural and religious traditions and also to demonstrate time for solemnity and enjoyment (Whaling 2009; Flueckiger 2015; Singh 2015). Undertaking pilgrimages in the Hindu religion is no exception. A pilgrimage has a significant role in the context of religious festivals (Whaling 2009) and it plays a vital part of the Hindu religious practices (Rinehart 2004) that are fully expressed at Hindu pilgrimage sites where religious traditions and culture are perpetuated (Shinde 2010).

2.2.4 Pilgrimages

2.2.4.1 Pilgrimage in major religions and its significance

Religion has the ability to move people, both emotionally and physically; this often characterises pilgrimages (Singh 2013) which can be a major motivation behind trips/visits to sacred places (Badone and Roseman 2004). A pilgrimage is one of the most important features of the world's largest religions: Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism (Timothy and Olsen 2006). For example, Muslims are encouraged to make a pilgrimage to Mecca and Madinah at least once in their lifetime as it is one of the five pillars of Islam, Hindus make pilgrimage to the holy river, the Ganges, as an act of cleansing and Christians make pilgrimage to places where God revealed Himself or to places having connection with Jesus Christ and His saints (Raj and Morpeth 2007).

Pilgrims, being religiously motivated, travel away from their homes to religious sites or events to take part in rituals and activities at their destinations (Timothy 2011).

According to Eade and Sallnow (1991), pilgrimage encompasses history, culture and is meaningful as it is related to religious motives. Frey (2004) goes one step further and says that pilgrimages are carried out based not only on one's culture and personal reasons but also on one's spiritualism and athleticism. Morinis (1992) believes that pilgrimage is a journey to look for the valued ideal which is a place outside of one's home. Pilgrimage can be a reason for migration, albeit pilgrimage is carried out to a sacred site regardless of whether it is a natural or man-made site (Scott 2012). A pilgrimage represents a religious journey where a pilgrim experiences the sacredness of the place (Sopher 2011), and expresses his/her deep feelings, belief, faith, sincerity and respect towards the Supreme (Singh 2013). A pilgrim also undertakes such journeys because of a deep religious conviction, to receive blessings, social commitment and the quest for existential meaning (Cohen 1992b; Digance 2003; Hyde and Harman 2011; Brown 2016).

Turner (1973), having studied pilgrimage in a social context, focused his research on the rites of passage in Zimbabwe, formerly known as Rhodesia. These rites of passage, symbolising one's initiation to a new step in life, is initiated outside the community where the participants not only develop a strong sense of unity with other companions but they also go through a liminal phase together where they lose their status. Being status-less they become one homogeneous group. This sense of unity or communion in this homogeneous group for a common purpose was termed, by Turner, as 'communitas'. Turner (1982) saw communitas as an anti-structure as it allows a unique experience outside the social structure that one is subject to in his/her daily life. At the end of the ritual, the pilgrimage, the participants re-enter their community and gain their preceding status back. Badone and Roseman (2004) identified that communitas can be developed among the out-castes and the poor or amongst those who deliberately detach themselves from the social structure for example artists. These authors also suggested that a pilgrimage is similar to a rite of passage as it provides an opportunity for participants to experience liminality and communitas. During this time, the social status of pilgrims is also lost or fades thereby showing solidarity amongst them (Singh 2013).

2.2.4.2 Pilgrimage in the Hindu religion

Pilgrimage, according to the Holy Scriptures, is symbolic of one's spiritual progress (Singh 2013). It is also viewed by Singh (2013) as a ritual which deepens as well as preserves one's culture while allowing for the re-discovery of myths which in turn causes one's personal and social transformation. Carrying out a pilgrimage is not only based on the pilgrim's awareness and determination but also on how the pilgrim is involved in that particular setting, whether he/she is committed to take his/her responsibility and how respectful he/she is vis-à-vis other pilgrims' needs (Singh 2013). In addition, this author states that the pilgrimage is a means to show penance and it is

undertaken for the purpose of purifying one's mind as well as a merit-giving act where the pilgrim can free himself/herself from shortcomings and be liberated.

A pilgrimage can be motivated by one's devotion, duty or hope and involves a cycle consisting of three stages (Singh 2013). Firstly, the initiation stage where the devotee becomes aware of the need to undertake a pilgrimage and decides to start a pilgrimage. Secondly, the liminality stage which includes the journey to a sacred space and the experiences along the way. Thirdly, the re-aggregation and liberation stage which includes the return of the devotee. Undertaking a pilgrimage symbolises a participation in the spiritual realm and establishes a relationship with the divine (Singh 2011). Singh (2011) pointed out that a Hindu pilgrimage primarily consists of the journey, movement as well as the sacred experiences. A pilgrimage has two attributes, namely a 'sacred place' and 'the journey'. In the Hindu religion, pilgrimage places are mainly associated to nature (for example caves, mountains and river banks) or culture in the form of temples, icons and relics (Bhardwaj and Rinschede 1988; Ruback et al. 2008) and the pilgrimage or sacred place being the magnet which draws the pilgrims (Singh 2013). According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, a Holy Scripture, pilgrimage places can exhibit extraordinary power through their soil, their water or they may have been proclaimed as holy or visited by the sages (Bhardwaj 1973; Sharpley and Sundaram 2005).

The Hindu pilgrimage is carried out as a social duty where the pilgrim sets out searching for a spiritual experience to a place which is more than what is spiritual and true reality, the sacred space (Singh 2013). At the end of the pilgrimage, the pilgrims return to their mundane life with positive experiences and share these with others (Singh 2013). The necessity of undertaking the pilgrimage stems from one's belief concerning a sacred place that it is different from the mundane space where one lives (Morinis 1984). In other words, pilgrims leave their homes, although bearing strong ties with home town to search for a centre of sacredness (Sopher 2011), their identity, spiritualism or to experience the divine (Osterrieth 1997). On their spiritual quest, the pilgrims search for the 'wholeness' leading to liminal faithscape, which consists of the sacred places, sacred rituals, sacred time and sacred meanings (Singh 2006), blessings leading to the transformation of oneself (Sax 1991) and delivering oneself from sins (Singh 2005; Singh 2013). Furthermore, it is viewed as a search for peace and willingness to experience the sacred spaces that lead to faith-building and to assert one's identity. The importance and growth of pilgrimage may be attributable to an increasing desire to assert a Hindu identity. Taking India as an example, the Hindus, wishing to assert their identity over the Muslim population (Singh 2013), participate more in celebrations, rituals and pilgrimages thereby publicly acknowledging their Hindu heritage (Singh 2013). This author also adds that pilgrimages are popular as they allow one to gain a higher identity in his/her society, reviving cultural links with the past, and build new social networks where the pilgrims can meet others and make friends, thereby enhancing fellowship amongst members of the same religious group.

Faith is an important part of pilgrimage, as it is a means for the pilgrims to act upon their desires and vows in an attempt to comprehend the divine (Singh 2013). A pilgrimage may involve several complex rites and practices before, during and after the journey to a pilgrimage site. It involves certain religious behaviours such as sacrifice, vegetarianism and other rites (Davidson and Gitlitz 2002). Fasting is a common practice in Hinduism before and during a festival. Although there are different degrees of fasting, most pilgrims consume vegetarian food and/or sweets/fruits; this is to ensure that the pilgrims enter the shrine in the purest possible state (Davidson and Gitlitz 2002). Sacrifice may include walking barefoot, having cold-water baths, not smoking, etc. (Davidson and Gitlitz 2002). In fact, it may be said that for Hindus, these behaviours and rituals are part of and lead to 'authentic' religious experiences and these provide them with the opportunity to build their faith.

2.2.4.3 Pilgrimages in Mauritius

The island of Mauritius is not only known for the Hindu religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri, and its two iconic and/or gigantic Hindu statues at Ganga Talao (see Section 1.2.3), but it is also blessed with the Père (Father) Laval shrine. Catholic Father Jacques Desiré Laval, a qualified French doctor, prior to becoming a priest, came to Mauritius as a missionary in 1841 (Richards 2009). After the death of Father Laval in 1864, his grave in the church at Sainte Croix was turned into a pilgrimage site (Davidson and Gitlitz 2002). Pope John Paul II beatified Father Laval in 1979 (Boswell 2006; Davies 2017). Since then, Father Laval is known as the 'national saint' (Richards et al. 2007). Every year on the 9th September, the date that marks the anniversary of his death, local Mauritians of all faith undertake the pilgrimage to his shrine (Richards et al. 2007; Republic of Mauritius 2019). For instance, Hindus and Muslims may take part in discourses during the pilgrimage and they also gather around his tomb with great esteem (Davidson and Gitlitz 2002; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and De Salle-Essoo 2014). Apart from the Mauritians, many tourists from all over the world partake in this pilgrimage (Ramdoyal 1994; Richards 2009). Local people believe that Father Laval's tomb has miraculous healing powers which could be compared to the water at Lourdes (Davidson and Gitlitz 2002; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and De Salle-Essoo 2014). At the shrine, the pilgrims pray, dance, sing songs and hear the mass in the church (Davidson and Gitlitz 2002; Davies 2017). During this pilgrimage, local people offer food and drink to the pilgrims. Unlike the Hindu religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri, the Father Laval pilgrimage is no more a public holiday. Also, whilst Ganga Talao is part of the local Hindu identity, the shrine of Father Laval is alleged to be more special for those of the Christian faith (Soper 2007). Despite the fact that both pilgrimage sites strengthen an individual's sense of belongingness and place identity, these sites are iconic and prestigious landmarks in Mauritius and play an important part in fostering tolerance, social and community cohesion and national identity.

2.2.5 Sacred spaces

2.2.5.1 *The meanings attached to sacred sites in the Hindu religion*

Religion confers symbolic meanings to places thereby making them sacred (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004). The religious content associated with the sacred space becomes the reason for visits, for example an event occurred there, or it is a place of worship associated with a sacred event, it is a place of healing or where sacred relics are kept, thereby making the place holy (Vukonić 2006). In Hindu traditions, such places are seen as being sublime and holy, and making a pilgrimage to such a place helps to maintain the sanctity as well as its significance (Singh 2013). Such sites help in one's quest for identity and role in the world (Swan 1990) as the sacred place is of existential value to the religious person (Eliade 1959). Walter (1988, p.75) has pointed out that this is also a place to "support the imagination, nourish religious experience, and convey religious truth. It organises sight and sound, introduces light to present clarity and order, or makes things dark to suggest unseen presence and hidden power". Singh (2013) is of the view that a sacred space is shaped by the human context in regard to memories, expectations, miracles and experiences. Therefore, the sacred space provides an environment in which to experience the senses, moral righteousness and cultural unity. In addition, Bremer (2003) has stated that place and identity are closely related because both are interdependent. For example, the formation of a sacred place is linked to the formation of identity and vice versa. This relationship between the sacred place and identity depends on the meaning that people attach to places and the transmission of customs from generation to generation (Singh 2013).

The belief that a space is holy or sacred is passed down to successive generations and made popular through cultural practices; this includes the practice of daily visit to the site or communicating with spirits (Singh 2013). Such practices not only enliven the sacred space, but also help people to meet and maintain friendships. As Ruback et al. (2008) have stated, these sacred places serve as a space for religious socialisation in the form of pilgrimage, experience and ritual. According to Jacobsen (2013), a sacred space is considered to provide an opportunity for salvation and he suggests that in Hinduism a sacred space is also a salvific space, which has divine and salvation power, where many goals, such as wealth, health, happiness, divinity, moral purity, salvation, or even rebirth in heaven, are thought to be attainable for those going to the pilgrimage site. Therefore, experiencing a sacred place after having undertaken a pilgrimage is an important feature of Hinduism as noted by Jacobsen (2013). Saloman (1979) classified holy places, based on Sanskrit texts, into three categories, namely: (1) a water-site which is related to the sacred bath undertaken on an auspicious day, (2) a shrine site which is visited by pilgrims who belong to a sect or are attached to a specific deity and (3) a circuit area (*Kshetra*) which, having preserved a form of *mandala*, a sacred centre, gives meaning to the journey one undertakes to reach it. These sacred places attract participants through their reputation of granting blessings to heal or purify the mind, body and soul (Stoddard 1997). By experiencing a sacred space, Hindus feel transformed (Singh 2013). Most of the salvific

spaces, in Hinduism, are associated with water; they may be situated near rivers or lakes or even on mountains. The ground itself may be thought to be sacred and temples are often built there. In primitive times, the importance of water was recognised as the rivers were praised as being purifying and holy and they were worshiped as deities (Jacobsen 2013). Therefore, it is believed that the water found at salvific spaces has purifying qualities. In Hinduism it is alleged that the sacred sites, where huge number of people perform pilgrimages and ritual bathing to purify them and attain salvation, have become an important doctrine. Additionally, the water at those sacred sites is used as holy water for carrying out rituals.

Although the extent of a place's sacredness may vary from one sacred space to another, devotees are attached to these (Norton 1989) as they provide the opportunity to contact the divine (Eade and Sallnow 1991) and act as a magnet for pilgrims for whom they carry powerful meanings and significance (Singh 2013). As such, the sacred space has the capacity to pull a wide range of devotees across social, economic, political, cultural ranges (Silverman 1994), regardless of where they are from, their status, beliefs, to make one congruent group (Singh 2013).

2.3 EXPERIENCE

2.3.1 An overview of the complexity of the term experience

Bruner (1986) distinguished between the terms 'an experience' and 'experiencing'. As such, when an individual is 'experiencing' something, this represents a constant temporal flow and thus it cannot be studied. An 'experience' however can be studied because it is an 'inter-subjective articulation of experience' (Bruner 1986, p.6). Bruner (1986) has suggested that as an 'inter-subjective articulation' takes place through a reflection on experience, it can therefore only happen once out of the flow of experience. Moore (1995) furthered this by adding that it is only when a specific experience is picked up from the flow and is distinguished from other experiences that one can reflect on the experience. The act of experiencing is very different from the act of reflecting on an experience.

The term experience is multifaceted as it can appear in many forms in different situations, for example each person going to a sacred site will go through an experience at the site which is unique to him/her: in other words, experience varies and can be interpreted differently by different individuals. It is therefore not easy to define (Maher 2007) and it is hard and challenging to put it into concepts or words (Frie 2003) because experience can be intangible, subjective and continuous (O'Dell 2007). Manthiou et al. (2014) have stated that there is a lack of empirical studies in the context of festival experience. In the light of this, it is necessary to find out how the experience is created as well as how a participant and the provider give meaning to it (Berridge 2007). This discussion of experience starts by looking at the nature of experience, followed by the clarification of what flow experiences are. It ends by considering the Festival as a product perspective.

2.3.2 The nature of experience

2.3.2.1 Defining the term experience

Dealing with the complex nature of the term 'experience', Sharpley and Stone (2012) have suggested that experience needs be considered in the context of constituent elements, for example motivation, consumption, perception, and so on. According to Boswijk et al. (2007) the process of creating meanings begins through the perception of the five senses and leads to emotions and then to an '*Erlebniss*', a lived experience. The '*Erlebniss*' adds to the '*Erfahrung*', the experience which has been evaluated, and to 'meaning' (Highmore 2002; Cutler and Carmichael 2010). Therefore, the '*Erlebniss*' can be seen as a part of the '*Erfahrung*' (Boswijk et al. 2007). An experience does not stand alone but in fact it is a process where many different elements come together during an event at different levels on an emotional, physical, intellectual or spiritual basis that gives rise to a memorable effect which stimulates the individual's senses (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Shaw and Ivens 2002; Gram 2005; Darmer and Sundbo 2008). The experience sought after can differ greatly, ranging from brief experiences of simple pleasure, to more meaningful experiences, such as pilgrimage experience, which are the most extreme form of experience (Cohen 1979; Rankin 2008). Experience is therefore a private phenomenon that the individual goes through (Nietz and Spickard 1990), often involving a change in one's consciousness.

An experience can be seen to be a product of what one can see, hear, taste, feel or smell. For example, when an individual goes to an event, he/she is taken by what he/she sees, hears, tastes, feels or smells during the event. These are known as the sensory perceptions (Boswijk et al. 2012). These senses in turn direct one's emotions, for example feeling happy or sad, based on their sensory perceptions during the event. These emotions guide the experiences, thereby creating a meaningful experience during the event. The more senses trigger the experience, the more effectively the experience will be memorable (Pine and Gilmore 1998). Put simply, an experience is a continuous process whereby an individual, interacting with his/her environment, gains subjective experiences; an experience is therefore a dynamic process which depends on the specific context.

Pine and Gilmore (1999), in their work on the 'experience economy', identified four types of offerings, namely commodities, services, goods and experiences. Commodities, services and goods are viewed as external to the individual while experience is seen as something personal to the individual that results from engaging himself/herself emotionally, intellectually, physically or spiritually (Pine and Gilmore 1998). Pine and Gilmore's (1999) concept of the 'experience economy' and their definition of experiences has contributed to the understanding of what experience is. From the consumer's viewpoint, an experience is something which is enjoyable, engaging and memorable during the event or activity (Oh et al. 2007). Pine and Gilmore (1999) delineated four realms of consumer experience, the 4Es, i.e. educational, escapist, aesthetic and entertainment, differentiated by the level and form of involvement of customers. For instance, the

individual can either be passively involved in the event or activity through aesthetic and entertainment, for example by indulging in environments, and by being entertained respectively or by being more actively involved for educational or escapism purposes, such as by learning something new or by finding a new self. With the aim of providing these consumer experiences, commoditisation of events or activities may take place. By being involved in an event or activity, individuals think about their lives and they think about themselves as a person and not in their roles, for example as a doctor, teacher or student. The individual has a chance to (re-) discover that experiences can be found in his/her immediate relationships as child, parent and friend and that it is these experiences which bestow meaning and significance to his/her lives. These meaningful experiences are both personal and emotional, and can change the person's life perspectives at that point. As such, these personal experiences not only determine one's motives but also dominate one's actions and direct one's life and the meaning one attaches to it (Boswijk et al. 2012).

2.3.2.2 The social context of experience

It is argued that in a social context, individuals are in fact looking for significance and a meaningful life, alongside others (Boswijk et al. 2012). What people actually want is a good life as well as to have fun; the focus being more on one's own experiences (Schulze 1992). While experiences can be positive or negative, they may not necessarily provide happiness (Piët 2004). Nevertheless, the feelings and experiences, and the values attached to these, gives an individual meaning to his/her life (Boswijk et al. 2012). In turn the meaningful experiences enable him/her to make choices which shape his/her life. This means that the individual chooses with whom he/she wants to enter into a relationship and how he/she wishes to do so. As such, individuals can direct themselves from within through self-direction, to search for other parties, from meaningful environments, to add significance to their own lives (Boswijk et al. 2012). This implies that the social factors as well as environmental factors play a crucial part in determining one's experiences.

The social context plays a crucial role in a festival. The festival itself being an organised event where members of the community participate on grounds of their common values either related to religious, language, national or historical (Cudny 2016). Therefore, experiences in the social context are those which are undergone together with others, for example alongside family member, friends, acquaintances, or travelling companions. The social experience gained alongside others is of a higher value than an experience undergone alone (Boswijk et al. 2012). For example, a festival can add to a devotee's personal and social experiences as it is celebrated alongside family and friends. These experiences are meaningful and profound and give significance to the devotee's lives. By participating in the festival, the devotee also gains direction in his/her life; it can be a turning point in his/her life. This turning point in one's life is usually followed by an emotional impact, as stated Boswijk et al. (2012). The turning point or change can either be painful or joyful. Festivals are likely to be associated with emotions which arise from the context, divulging more about oneself, for instance, who we are, what we appreciate or what we love (Boswijk et al. 2012).

2.3.2.3 *Flow experience*

Experiences, it is suggested (Bruner 1986), are comparable to a stream as they involve an ongoing flow of reality which is received by one's consciousness. This is also known as cognition. In addition to cognition, experience also involves one's expectations, bodily states and feelings (Merleau-Ponty 1964) because reality is represented through not only language but also as impressions and images (Fernandez 1986). This flow refers to something that is beyond the individual's enjoyment of his/her everyday activities (Csikszentmihalyi and Kubey 1981). It refers to the set of activities which display a distinct structure (Nietz and Spickard 1990) and which allows for experiences of an extra-ordinary nature. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) has stated that flow can also be derived from religious rituals as these rituals can produce sensory stimuli helping the follower to maintain his/her focus which allows the sacred realm to be maintained. Flow can occur when the individual is alone or when he/she is among a community, given that it is the activities which lead to the flow.

Religion and play are two common activities that can produce flow, but it should be noted that it is not in all cases that they can produce a flow experience. Play such as rock climbing, for example, is activities where individuals put their time and efforts to gain a distinctive experience. For Csikszentmihalyi (1975b, p.43),

Flow denotes the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement. It is the kind of feeling after which one nostalgically says: "that was fun" or "that was enjoyable". It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part. We experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present and future.

The occurrence of religious experience can be beyond the control of man. It is something that can take control of the seeker and carry him/her forward. It is something which is fundamental or which can conquer the senses (Neitz and Spickard 1990). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1975b), religious rituals can also exhibit flow. The religious rituals produce sensory stimuli which help the follower to maintain his/her concentration that bring up a sacred realm. Other social scientists such as Turner (1974) have used the term *communitas* and Durkheim (1915) has used, *collective effervescence*, to illustrate something similar to the flow-state (Csikszentmihalyi 1975a).

Religion can be thought of as being something more than a transcendent experience (Neitz and Spickard 1990). It remains an important facet in the modern society even though there are lots of avenues to flow. Although religions may help in maintaining society, they may also suggest the existence of supernatural beings (Neitz and Spickard 1990). From Csikszentmihalyi's (1975b)

perspective, these beliefs are considered as being the side effects of religion. Like Durkheim (1915), Csikszentmihalyi (1975b) considered religion to be objective. However, his view differed from Durkheim's approach in that he believed that religious experience is not only achieved when one is in a group. This means that the flow can take place when someone is alone or when someone is among a community given that it is the activities that lead to the flow.

2.3.3 Festivals viewed from a product perspective

2.3.3.1 Defining a product and its importance

This research adopts the product framework that is used in marketing to understand the nature of the religious experiences. This is not often the case in religious research but was considered appropriate in this study given that the Mauritian authorities see the potential for promoting and developing the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri as a tourist attraction. Also, since the organisations are involved in the planning, delivering and promoting of a festival product, they need to understand and meet the desires and needs of the targeted customers. In contrast, the consumers, tourists or Mauritian Hindu residents, seek for benefits from the product.

A product is anything that has the potential to be on the market, whether it is for consumption, acquisition or has other uses to meet an individual's needs (Kotler and Armstrong 2017). The definition of product is rather broad in that it includes events, services, and places amongst others. Although there are many definitions dealing with a product as being manufactured merchandise, Kotler (1994) stated that a product can be a number of things, including a service, place, person or even an object, organisation or idea. In the last three decades, the definition of product has shifted to include both goods which are tangible and services which are intangible, with the purpose of meeting the needs of a target market; this is commonly identified as the "product/service mix" (Renaghan 1981) as it includes both the goods and the service (Levitt 1981). Therefore, a product can be seen as anything which is built, natural, ongoing or temporary, fixed or mobile (du Cros and McKercher 2015). According to Swarbrooke (2002), the product/service mix can apply to attractions, for example someone visiting a cathedral can gain pleasure from its 'physical' tangible products by looking at sculptures or stained glasses, or by enjoying the intangible products such as the spirituality of the cathedral or its atmosphere. Swarbrooke (2002) has also suggested that the product/service mix may also apply to events. For example, by attending a show, an individual can gain aesthetic pleasure by listening to music, the intangible element, all the while enjoying the physical element by being seated in the front row.

In order to appeal to a target market, a product needs to provide satisfying experiences which could be exciting and unique to the customers (du Cros and McKercher 2015). It also needs to be the right product provided at the right quantity, right quality, right place and right time (Failte Ireland 2012). Local festivals, as products, can also generate unique experiences. Copley and Robson (1996) and

Blackwell (1997) have stated that uniqueness stems from history, traditions, culture, environment and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, such products can provide benefits which customers look for and expect to experience during their visit (Swarbrooke 2002). As such, if the product is viewed as providing a benefit, then it is a benefit.

2.3.3.2 *The three levels of product*

A product can be thought of in terms of three levels: the core product, the actual or tangible product and the augmented product (Levitt 1981; Kotler 1994), illustrated by Figure 2.1.

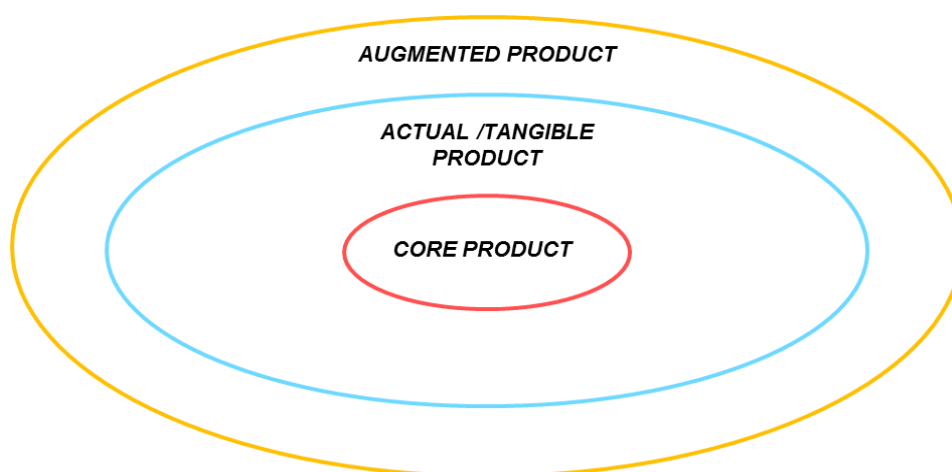


Figure 2.1: Three levels of a product

First, the core product relates to what a ‘customer’ looks for in a product before a purchase (Swarbrooke 2002), or as du Cros and McKercher (2015) stated, anything which can be marketed, for consumption, use or acquisition, thereby satisfying a core wants or need. The product is seen in terms of the benefit it brings or the problems it solves and not its attributes per se (du Cros and McKercher 2015). For instance, someone visits a sacred site hoping to receive benefits from the site. How individuals expect to benefit depends on two aspects, namely the nature of individuals themselves and the type of attractions; these aspects may also determine whether the attraction is in fact beneficial or not (Swarbrooke 2002). The nature of visitors includes, among other characteristics, their age, life experiences, way of living and personality. The type of attraction also matters, for example someone visiting a theme park may seek excitement, the enjoyment of on-site attractions and the companionship at the attraction. Another example is when someone visiting a temple may seek to benefit from the peaceful and spiritual atmosphere and the aesthetic pleasure of looking at the architecture of the temple. In the context of religion, the product offered by religion relates to something which is sacred to the religion, with the core representing that aspect without which it stops being that faith (Martin 2006). Sacredness can come from any of the religion’s seven dimensions as proposed by Smart (1996, 1998).

Second, the actual or tangible product is a product which customers can buy in order to satisfy their needs. It is the physical manifestation of the core product which is purchased (du Cros and McKercher 2015). The actual product is the means by which the core need is satisfied. In a broad perspective of product offering, the actual product can have a brand name, features, quality, packaging and styling, all of which makes it more appealing for customers to buy (Swarbrooke 2002; Kotler and Armstrong 2017). At this level, the product developer or planner will turn the core benefits into the actual product.

Lastly, the augmented product relates to the additional benefits and services which a customer is given; this can be both tangible and intangible, and it goes beyond what the customer would want and need. In essence, it does more than meeting the needs of customers. However, the augmented factors may not always be under the control of the product planner or developer. For example, weather conditions are not within the control of the planners. For instance, if a site is known to attract rain, and provisions are made to keep the participants from being in the rain, this could potentially augment their experiences. In effect, augmented aspects are enlargements of core aspects; they extend, intensify and reinforce the core aspects (Kesavan et al. 2014). In the context of religion, the augmented product consists of those aspects of religious experience that are not seen as sacred which is in contrast to the core product which are considered to be sacred and immutable (Martin 2006). For example, while it may be unacceptable for the church/religious authorities to update its doctrine to reflect changes in the society or change its view on what consists of acceptable behaviour, it would be acceptable for the church/religious authorities to provide services, non-doctrine related activities, for its members (Stevens et al. 1995).

2.3.3.3 Festivals as a product experience

Experience can be seen as a product. This is supported by Swarbrooke (2002) who, taking a visitor attraction as an example, noted that the product (the visitor attraction) can be seen as an experience. Swarbrooke (2002) adds that the experience is in fact an on-going process whereby an individual starts to gain the experience before the visit at the anticipation stage, and then when he/she plans the visit, travels to and from the place, visits the attraction, and lastly, he/she recollects memories after the visit to the attraction.

Using the characteristics of services, as identified by Grönroos (2000), an event or a religious festival is (1) intangible – it is not a physical object and so is untouchable, (2) inseparable - it cannot be celebrated without participants, (3) variable – it is unique in terms of content and context and (4) perishable - it has a timescale with a starting and an end date. This implies that an event can be seen as a mixture of products and services (Reic and Lance 2017) thereby delivering experiences. For Lovelock and Wirtz (2011), both festivals and events are service product experiences.

Following the example of Swarbrooke (2002) and, applying it to the context of a religious festival, it can be seen that the experiences of the participants may be influenced by a number of factors. Firstly, this may be the tangible aspect of the site during the festival, for instance the cleanliness of the site. Secondly, the religious rites and services being delivered by staff who are engaged in delivering the experiences for the festival. The experience is largely dependent on staff, for instance it is likely that the participants will have direct contact with the staff/priests as part of the rituals. Therefore, the competence, behaviour and appearance of the staff/priests may influence the experience of the participants. Thirdly, it may be the participants themselves. Each participant perceives the religious festival differently based on their beliefs, expectations, attitudes, behaviour, religious background and experiences. Therefore, the resulting experience is customised according to what each individual think.

The impact of these factors has a different influence on each individual when he/she attends a religious festival at the site. Therefore, key stakeholders involved in producing, managing and delivering the religious festival need to think about the three-tier level of products in terms of religious experiences. It is vital for these key stakeholders to understand what the consumers are seeking as religious experiences during the festival or in other words what religious experiences are needed by the participants.

2.3.3.4 The four stages of the pilgrimage experiences

Shackley (2001) has proposed that there are four stages in respect of the visitor's experience in relation to a visit to a sacred site; she uses the term visitor to comprise all types of visitors. Her model includes the first stage being the anticipation stage where the visitor has to gather information, do some research or carry out religious preparation. The second stage is the journey to the site which can include wearing special clothes or carrying out special rites. The third stage is the visit which includes the visitor's experience based not only on the time spent at the religious site but also on the perception of the journey and anticipation stages. The fourth stage is the return which is used to think over the features of the experience. Shackley's (2001) model can be recast in terms of a pilgrim who is undertaking a pilgrimage to and from a sacred site. The current research will therefore consider these four stages in the context of the 'religious experience' acquired by participants to and from a sacred site by regarding the visitors as pilgrims.

2.3.3.4.1 The anticipation stage

Motivation is an important factor that drives people to attend a religious festival. The most obvious motivational factors include worshipping and visiting the site/festival for spiritual merit, while the less obvious factors are education and nostalgia (Shackley 2001). Other motives recorded in the literature include: life-changing experience, winning new energy, feeling close to God, seeking inner happiness, searching for meaning, finding inner peace, fulfilling vows, re-affirmation of faith,

accompanying friends and families, cleansing sin, paying respect to god, for curiosity, healing purposes, religious fulfilment, cultural reasons, seeking to strengthen one's belief, salvation, enlightenment and experiencing the extraordinary, a sense of grandeur, the holy atmosphere and the mystery of religion (Turner 1973; Turner and Turner 1978; Cohen 1992a; Cohen 1992b; Collins-Kreiner and Klot 2000; Tomasi 2002; Digance 2003; Timothy and Olsen 2006; Ambrosio 2007; Reader 2007; Shuo et al. 2009; Hyde and Harman 2011; Raj 2012). During the anticipation stage, pilgrims build their expectations as to what they are likely to encounter on the way to the site and during the visit to the site based on photographs of the site, conversations with other pilgrims who already visited the site, documentaries and so on.

2.3.3.4.2 The journey

According to Shackley (2001), the journey undertaken to reach a site can be a significant component of the experience, especially because an individual may have, for many years, been building up a spiritual anticipation. She also asserts that the experience is influenced by companions who may be travelling together. The journey, in the form of pilgrimage (Swatos and Tomasi 2002) is normally carried out on foot, with little baggage, and may be hard, long, risky and difficult. The term pilgrimage relates to an ancient practice of several world religions where a devotee undertook long, difficult and hard journeys to worship at temples and shrines (Gouthro and Palmer 2010). The pilgrimage may involve hardship, a form of religious experience, in the form of pain, exhaustion and even injury (Lulk 2012). Experiencing austerity is a vital part of the pilgrimage (Frey 1998) where the pilgrim learns not only the potential and limitations of his/her body but also the respect for the needs of his/her body (Lulk 2012).

Barber (1993) defined pilgrimage as a journey that is undertaken for religious causes, to a holy site - as an external factor - and for spiritual reasons and understanding - as an internal purpose. Badone and Roseman (2004) furthered this by saying that this internal and external journey is carried out towards an ideal destination. According to these authors, the pilgrims involved in these spiritual and physical movements expect to experience a change in the way they view their relationship with the sacred. Pilgrims have common traits whereby they are all searching for something and they expect to be rewarded at the end of their pilgrimage with an extraordinary experience that would take them to a special and sacred state, and away from their mundane life (Timothy and Olsen 2006). Mauss (1991) defined this pilgrimage experience as a total experience because the journey consists of leaving one's home, family and environment. The experiences during a pilgrimage are often described as extraordinary and profound. Thus, pilgrimage is not only about the physical journey but also about the inner journey of the pilgrim who is looking for meaning (Timothy and Olsen 2006). Singh (2006) has suggested that the pilgrimage is in fact an inner journey which is manifested in an exterior space; the two, joined, form the complex phenomenon, which is the religious experience. Pilgrimage thus involves a complex interaction between the pilgrim and the changing physical environment surrounding him/her during his/her pilgrimage, for example the

changing views of the landscape from the fields to the shrine. Bowman (1991) recognised that the relationship between the pilgrim and the place is important because pilgrims often associate the pilgrimage with the inherited image of their travels. As such, Haberman (1994) stated that by carrying out a pilgrimage, the pilgrim experiences the numinous qualities of the land by thinking about or listening to the stories linked to the landscape. Therefore, the more the pilgrims engage with the landscape or the surroundings, the more likely they are to describe themselves as being closer to understanding the meaning of the pilgrimage and the place (Badone and Roseman 2004).

2.3.3.4.3 The visit to a sacred space

Once at the sacred site, a pilgrim's religious experience can be influenced by the services provided at the site. This may include catering, sign posts, and the attitude or behaviour of staff at the site. Shackley (2001) identified that staff - including priests - can be seen as an intrinsic component of the experience, which can be consumed as part of a total experience. Likewise, pilgrims at a sacred site can also be seen as a component of the experience. While worshippers attending a service can be seen as part of the service at the sacred site, the non-worshippers are watchers of a sacred dance, which in turn contributes to their experience (Shackley 2001). At the site, there are also rules which are customarily followed. For example, Shackley (2001) has acknowledged that codes of dress and behaviour are frequently imposed at a sacred site to ensure its conservation, for example shoe-covers or even face masks are provided in certain areas. Simpson (1993) demonstrated that expected behaviour differs widely between sites depending on different religious and cultural traditions.

2.3.3.4.4 The return

Shackley (2001) asserted that the return journey is when the pilgrim reflects on the key features of the experience. According to her, this stage comprises intangible (e.g. spiritual benefits) and a collection of tangible features (souvenirs and relics). This stage is not entirely applicable within the context of the Festival in Mauritius. Even though pilgrims return home from the sacred site, they may subsequently take part in the Char Pahar ki Pooja in the nearest temple to where they reside on the night of the Festival.

2.4 AUTHENTICITY OF EXPERIENCES

2.4.1 The contentious nature of 'authenticity' in the tourism literature

There has been wide consideration of the concept authenticity within the tourism literature as many academics and scholars feature it as part of their study or research. Originally used in the museum

context to describe objects as they appear or as they are claimed to be (Trilling 1972), the study of authenticity has experienced continuous growth over the last 40 years within tourism literature (Tribe et al. 2012; Xiao et al. 2013). With all the debate of the use, meaning and importance of authenticity in different fields from the 1960s, the term authenticity continues to be multifarious and mystifying today. A diverse range of terminology has been associated with the concept of authenticity, for example, adaptable, multifaceted, subjective, slippery, problematic, ambiguous, elusive and so on (Wang 1999; Costa and Bamossy 2001; Steiner and Reisinger 2006; Chronis and Hampton 2008).

Authenticity is not tangible but rather a perception of, or the significance of, something that needs assessing (Brida et al. 2013). In the tourism literature of social sciences, authenticity has featured within different streams such as being a marketing tool when holiday trips are promoted by offering experiences like the 'real' Africa or 'hidden' Asia. This concept within the tourism context is associated with cuisine, festivals, rituals, products, a travel, a journey or an undertaken holiday. For Sharpley (2008), authenticity on one hand can be used to differentiate the niche versus mass tourism products where the mass tourism indicates inauthentic. On the other hand, something authentic is to some extent very closely associated to everything that is associated with a culture. In such a case, something can be authentic or claimed to be authentic if it has been produced or it is part of the custom and traditions within a host community. In this sense, authenticity can represent a traditional culture, the origin, the real or the genuineness.

Festivals, as cultural products, are perceived as authentic by tourists if the festivals are carried out by the local community as per their traditions and customs (Brida et al. 2013). According to Brida et al. (2013), authenticity plays an important role in making cultural festivals successful. It helps attendees assess both the value and quality of the experiences and the cultural products (Kim and Jamal 2007) thereby influencing their satisfaction from attending a cultural event and their loyalty towards the event (Brida et al. 2013) or loyalty towards the destination (Kolar and Zabkar 2010; Bryce et al. 2015). The authenticity of cultural festivals is a major factor of motivation for tourists to attend festivals to explore culture (Chang 2006) and to experience the uniqueness of the festival and its symbolic meaning (Getz 2008; Gursoy et al. 2006; Castéran and Roederer 2013).

Since the original attempts to define authenticity, other scholars have shown their interest by interpreting the term as seen in literature (Selwyn 1996; Grayson and Martinec 2004). These authors have debated the term authenticity by discussing its diversity, for example MacCannell (1973) has discussed staged authenticity as opposed to true authenticity, Selwyn (1996) has debated hot versus cool authenticity while Grayson and Martinec (2004) have argued on indexical authenticity as opposed to iconic authenticity. Although there was an attempt to argue on what authenticity really meant, these authors failed to give a concrete definition of authenticity. As such, Bruner (1994) argues that the term authenticity is too vague and has several meanings. This is also supported by Van Leeuwen (2003) who acknowledged the fact that authenticity is a socially

constructed phenomenon but eventually it remains an evaluative concept despite the fact that it may be assessed methodically. As a consequence, the mystery about what “authenticity” really means still remains to be solved.

Blended with tourist activity and experience, authenticity was brought to life in sociological studies on motivations and the experiences of tourists through the work of MacCannell (1973, 1976). Although MacCannell’s approach formed the concept of authenticity, it has been criticised by those who find that authenticity is less strict a concept than MacCannell thought it to be at that time. Thereafter, debate on authenticity has been burgeoning in the tourism literature (Moscardo and Pearce 1986; Cohen 1988; Wang 1999). Cohen (1979) has partly agreed with MacCannell concerning the search for authentic experiences, but he argued that authenticity is fluid because it is a ‘socially constructed concept’ and therefore its meaning remains flexible. He also stated that the motivation to travel does not in itself explain what tourists seek as a travel experience. For instance, DeLyser (1999) has shown that authenticity is not an end result or even an initiator of travel, but as a matter of fact it is a vehicle through which tourists or visitors come into contact with, or interact with, each other, and with the tourist site. Similarly, such developing and pragmatic approaches are apparent in research that analyses authenticity in relation to the significance of its context (Cohen 2003), in connection to those who benefit from it (Barthel-Bouchier 2001) and its association to the discerning abilities of those who are involved (Johnson 2007).

The concept of authenticity is often viewed as problematic (Buchmann et al. 2010) due to its limited usage (Cohen 1988) which has resulted in the burgeoning of various theoretical standpoints (Rickly-Boyd 2012). Certain scholars have even considered either replacing the term or entirely discarding it (Bruner 1994; Jackson 1999). However, divorcing from authenticity is not the real solution to the problem especially because the term has experienced an outburst and embracement of the term authentication (Xie 2011; Cohen and Cohen 2012). Consequently, other scholars for example Wang (1999), have attempted to redefine the term authenticity by justifying and enhancing the explanatory power of the concept through the introduction of ‘existential authenticity’, which is based on the personal feelings that arise during activities and not on objects. As such, authenticity remains a modulate concept given that different stakeholders (academics, scholars, businessmen and individuals) perceive it differently, which increases the schism of how these stakeholders view social reality and how they understand the very nature of authenticity. For this reason, there have been systematic debates on authenticity within the sociology of culture and the social psychology (Vannini and Williams 2009). Such debates have been common only in the last twenty years whereas the tourists’ experience, of an inauthentic and authentic nature, of travel in search for the authentic, and of the authenticity of rituals, cultural expressions and artefacts created for tourists have been the subject of debate and research for a longer period in the field of tourism and travel studies (Wang 1999; Olsen 2003; Reisinger and Steiner 2006). Jamal and Hill (2002) have stated that people interpret authenticity in tourism experiences, objects and events in many ways, thus making it more difficult to define and describe the concept.

2.4.2 Wang's typology

2.4.2.1 The three types of authenticity of experiences

Wang (1999) tried to conceptualise the concept authenticity. First, he suggested that there is an objectivist approach which concerns the extent that the toured objects are original and authentic. Second, there is the constructivist approach which views authenticity as being a socio-cultural projection which generates different versions of authenticities concerning the same object. Third, Wang (1999) attempted to redefine the term authenticity by justifying and enhancing the explanatory power of the concept through the introduction of the concept of 'existential authenticity' as an alternative to objective and constructive authenticity. Existential authenticity, Wang argued, is activity-related i.e. based on personal feelings that arise during activities, and not object-related which is based on the toured object. Lastly, Wang (1999) stated that there is the postmodernist approach which deconstructs the notion of the original and blurs the line between what is real and what is fake. According to him, the postmodernist is not concerned with whether something is authentic or not. Taking the example of Disneyland, Eco (1986) takes a postmodernist view where the author says that as Disney World is something that is born out of imagination and fantasy, no reference can be made as to its originality. Using these concepts, it can be said that Wang (1999) has clarified authenticity as being very wide and that it can be looked at differently from diverse perspectives.

2.4.2.2 Objective authenticity

MacCannell (1973), who initiated the debate on authenticity, highlighted that tourists play a crucial part in their search for authenticity. He has stated that, similar to tourists' attraction to places of cultural, social or historical meaning, pilgrims also desire to be in places which are embedded with religious significance. As such, he pointed out that the motive for a pilgrimage is similar to the motive behind a tour because both of them are in search of authentic experiences. In his argument that tourism functions in a similar way to religion, MacCannell accidentally implied that the concept of authenticity can be divided into two parts: relationship authenticity, which deals with one's separation from one's modern life, and object authenticity, which refers to toured objects such as artefacts, activities or life processes (Lau 2010). Object authenticity has various meanings, including the meaning in MacCannell's sense, and therefore it is important to use the appropriate sense to achieve the appropriate result (Lau 2010). For example, not all individuals are concerned about the spiritual meaning of a destination, but rather they are more concerned with the authenticity of the destination. In effect, Lau (2010) stated that not everyone is looking for the same thing, and so, authenticity should be looked at in the context within which it is being considered. Taking scuba divers for example, it is probably right to say that spiritual meaning would be irrelevant to the divers and instead scuba diving should be looked at as a tourist object. Conversely, in considering authenticity for pilgrims, whose purpose is to have a spiritual walk or to find the

divine, it is probably not appropriate to consider the toured object itself but the experiences of the pilgrims, experiences that are thought to be existentially authentic.

Objective authenticity means that the object/subject remains in its original or in the primitive form (Kim and Jamal 2007) with no deviation in interpretation. It focuses on the genuineness of structures, objects or artefacts (Rickly-Boyd 2012). According to Wang (1999), the use of the term “objective authenticity” assumes that there is a precise standard by which authenticity, the genuineness of something, can be determined. Therefore, a quest for authenticity in this context would mean a search for the genuine, or the originals. Waitt (2000) conducted empirical research analysing authenticity in terms of the genuine, original, traditional or primitive. Moreover, it is thought that, by searching for the authentic, someone unavoidably commoditises the authenticity of an object. Kim and Jamal (2007) have said that only an absence of commoditisation (the act of making a product into a commodity) will help determine the authenticity of a toured object. The emphasis on the objective authenticity is that the toured object remains in its original or primitive form. This is similar to what MacCannell (1973) suggested when he talked about the search for the “authentic experience”. According to this author, individuals look for the authenticity of the originals in order to experience authentic feelings but often they become prey of “staged authenticity” - fake authenticity. As soon as this happens, the individuals’ experience can no longer amount to an authentic experience although they might think that they have achieved an authentic experience. As such, MacCannell (1973) suggested that an authentic experience can only be achieved if the object itself is authentic.

The objectivist approach is founded on the originality of a toured object, for example a site or an attraction (Belhassen et al. 2008). As such, it can be argued that this originality is measurable using objective criteria to establish whether or not an object is authentic. The problem with this approach is that there is no means to determine who establishes these criteria and how they are established (Boorstin 1964; MacCannell 1976; Wang 1999). Additionally, the issue with object authenticity is that existing literature limits the use of the term object authenticity to cultural, social and historical objects. Therefore, it cannot be used to explain other situations (Lau 2010). This approach is also challenging because changes in cultures are inevitable in the face of changing circumstances in the world (Reisinger and Steiner 2006). As the objective approach is problematic due to its limitations, this gave rise to the constructive approach (Wang 1999).

2.4.2.3 Constructivist approach

Constructive authenticity refers to an individual’s personal interpretation of what is or is not authentic (Cohen 1979; Belhassen et al. 2008). Although both the constructivist and the objective approaches concern the toured object, the constructivist approach differs from the objective approach by providing a broader interpretation of the term authenticity and a larger scope of application across the activities (Cohen 1988; Wall and Xie 2005). This approach also differs in

that it centres mainly on the symbolic meanings rather than on the originality of the toured objects (Belhassen et al. 2008). The focus of the constructivist approach is on how authenticity is perceived. Therefore, constructive authenticity is socially construed and it has social connotation which is mutable (Cohen 1988; Xie 2011). It is often related to one's personal interpretation of what authenticity means (Belhassen et al. 2008). Things may also be authentic if they have been invented through tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). According to Belhassen et al. (2008), the concept of constructive authenticity is dynamic because it can be used for toured places that were previously seen as being inauthentic, for example Disneyland which was initially inauthentic, but has been described by Eco (1986) as being authentic with time. This is also supported by Cohen (1988) who averred that anything that happens now can potentially be seen as authentic in the future. As Culler (1981) stated, the constructivists' approach suggests that individuals are looking for symbolic authenticity rather than objective authenticity. As such, from the constructivist's point of view, a toured object is authentic because it is a symbol of the real (Hinch and Higham 2005), and it is a negotiable concept (Cohen 1988; Wall and Xie 2005), which is only dependent on the view point of the individual judging it. Pearce and Moscardo (1986) viewed authenticity as pluralistic whereby each individual experiences, interprets or defines it by how he/she sees or perceives it to be. Therefore, if an individual experiences a toured object as being authentic, it is construed as being authentic (Cohen 1988).

In making a case for the constructivist approach, Bruner (1994) pointed out that there is no original, or a definite absolute, which is reliable to assert that there is in fact an absolute authenticity. As he says, culture has been here for a very long time and it is still in process whereas we, individuals, have only entered society in the middle of it. Therefore, authenticity cannot be found in an object, forever fixed in time, but it is rather a social process and as such the original itself cannot be ascertained (Bruner 1994). Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) furthered this view by saying that originals or traditions had themselves once been invented. Authenticity can also be seen as being community oriented (Chambers 2010), where the authenticity of a cultural object is judged by the social strength it carries. The strength can then be influenced by the media; this in turn influences the authenticity of the object. Media can therefore influence authenticity (Lindholm 2008). Such influence can either be positive or negative in that it may lead to individuals finding or not finding authenticity where they are looking.

Wang (1999) has stated that the objective and constructive approaches are unsatisfactory because they only explain authenticity which is object-related. He redefined the term authenticity by justifying and enhancing the explanatory power of the concept through the concept of 'existential authenticity', which is activity-related i.e. based on personal feelings that arise during activities, and not object-related which is based on the toured object. Existential authenticity can also be seen as experience-related (Kim and Jamal 2007; Castéran and Roederer 2013).

2.4.2.4 Existential authenticity

When people are born, they come into a world of pre-existing beliefs and values, from where they learn how to socialise, behave and so on (Kirillova et al. 2016). By endorsing these values, they compromise their own essence (Sartre 1966), thereby making themselves inauthentic (Heidegger 1962). In order to attain authenticity, these individuals need to forgo cultural values to preserve meaningful intrinsic values (Kirillova et al. 2016). The term existential authenticity has been welcomed by many scholars as a form of subjective authenticity (Steiner and Reisinger 2006), while others continue to debate on it. It is subjective because, as Collins-Kreiner (2010) noted, each individual interprets his/her experience in his/her way. According to Belhassen and Caton (2006), the term existential authenticity is highly-functional and it is in fact an open concept allowing different scholars with different standpoints to discuss, to reflect and to influence each other thus generating and adding new knowledge in the tourism field. Some authors believe that existential authenticity should be employed and the use of the concept of 'object authenticity' should be abandoned (Steiner and Reisinger 2006), as existential experiences are not derived from and do not depend on authentic surroundings (Wang 2000). Nevertheless, in practice, the concept of object authenticity is not lost and is therefore still relevant (Belhassen and Caton 2006; Chhabra 2010, 2012), especially because of one's perspectives and understanding of what constitute authenticity (Taheri et al. 2017).

The term existential authenticity reflects a conceptual shift from an objective view to a more subjective view of authenticity (Wang 1999; Kim and Jamal 2007). Belhassen et al. (2008) have supported the view that there is merit in this conceptual shift because it justifies the individual and other types of manifestations of his/her experiences. Therefore, adopting the scope of existential authenticity becomes a wise option as it considers experience based on the personal feelings of those involved in the activities and not based solely on objects (Wang 1999). Zhou et al. (2015) furthered this definition by stating that existential authenticity is associated with feelings, emotions and perceptions of the individuals in terms of their identity, unique spiritual experience and their connection to civilisation as well as local history. In other words, the study of authenticity should not be thought to be that of the toured objects but rather that of a function of the self. Kim and Jamal (2007) suggested that festivals are non-tangible aspects of heritage that offer freedom from the daily life. This freedom, from the daily routine, is believed to help attain an authentic way of being. As such, by repeatedly going to festivals, the festival-goers are able to cultivate more of their authentic selves by repeatedly transcending the social norms (Kim and Jamal 2007).

The concept existential authenticity has been used by other authors in the past (Trilling 1972; Berger 1973; Taylor 1991; Golomb 1995). Existential authenticity refers to the special state of 'Being' where one is true to oneself (Berger 1973) and one behaves in accordance to this (Schlegel et al. 2011). Berger (1973) added that existential authenticity acts as a treatment to the loss of "true self" in the modern Western society in public spheres and public roles. Therefore, this indicates that

existential authenticity is not concerned with whether or not the toured object is real. In fact, Wang (1999) suggests that in searching for tourist experiences, which are existentially authentic, the individuals are more concerned with the activities that trigger an existential state of 'Being'. According to Steiner and Reisinger (2006), existential authenticity is a product of the philosophy related to the meaning of being human, being happy and being oneself (Kierkegaard 1985; Sartre 1992; Heidegger 1996; Nehemas 1999).

Authenticity is often associated with making oneself as one wants to be (Kierkegaard 1985), one's well-being (Bettencourt and Sheldon 2001) and one's positive self-esteem (Goldman and Kernis 2002). According to Kierkegaard (1985) an individual has to be in touch with his/her inner self, knowing himself/herself, having an awareness of his/her identity and then living according to this sense of his/her self. It is thought that, only then, an individual can experience authenticity. Sartre (1992) said that when an individual is faced by different possibilities, it is up to him/her to avow his/her will in the choices he/she makes. According to Sartre (1992), reality is in fact insignificant and what is significant is how people live their lives so that they experience an authentic existence.

Wang (1999) associated existential authenticity with activity. He identified that the identity of an individual is created and reaffirmed when the individual visits places which are associated with the past. To this, Kirillova and Lehto (2015) added that existential authenticity is fostered in places representing liminal zones where social norms seem to be temporarily suspended, thereby providing a suitable environment for individuals to act their authentic selves and to attain liberation. Similarly, Brown (1996) articulated that an existential authenticity is triggered when someone is having a good time, whereas Pons (2003) suggested that this is triggered when one is bodily involved with the world. These authors placed substantial significance on 'activity'. As individuals engage in non-usual activities, they free themselves from the constraints of the everyday life, and this makes them feel more themselves (Wang 1999). Existential authenticity can be manifested in many situations as compared to object authenticity (Handler and Saxton 1988; Crang 1996; Wang 1999). The importance of existential authenticity here is crucial as it demonstrates how this can be categorised as being a human activity, which creates opportunities for experiencing the meaning of being human (Steiner and Reisinger 2006).

Heidegger (1996) viewed existential authenticity as concerning human authenticity. He used the term authenticity to point out that an individual is being himself/herself existentially. For Heidegger (1996), an individual can be existential by existing according to his/her nature, which in fact transcends the everyday activities or behaviour or the thought about one's self. He described existential authenticity as being experience-oriented whereby the existential self is momentary and not permanent. Based on this thought, Heidegger (1996) suggested that someone can only be momentarily authentic in different situations. This is comparable to what some scholars have been saying relating to authenticity arising from the search for new experiences outside the daily routine (Turner 1973; Handler 1986; Brown 1996), allowing the individual to distance him/her from norms

and view life from another perspective (Turner 1973). Furthering this, Brown (1996) stated that tourists enjoy non-ordinary activities which free them from the constraints of their everyday life. As such, the new experience is thought to bring about the authenticity of the individual. Put in another way, when the individual is coping with his/her everyday life, he/she is thought to be inauthentic. Heidegger (1996) placed significant emphasis on the meaning of being human. To him, being human means to have possibilities or opportunities and to have the capacity to choose among these. Steiner and Reisinger (2006) emphasised that when talking about authenticity, one should always remember that it is about free choices, and it is not about maintaining old traditions or cultures. Kim and Jamal (2007) also supported this view by saying that the participants in their research were free from the everyday constraints where their behaviours were not governed by social norms or regulations of the daily living. This liberation was thought to enable them to experience an authentic self instead of being lost in public spheres and public roles.

Steiner and Reisinger (2006) acknowledged that some individuals desire to have a common or shared experience, whereas others crave to have a unique experience. A collective participation in rituals, where groups of individuals join together during an event to share their feelings of closeness, solidarity and unity, can also confer an authentic experience (Fine and Speer 1997). Likewise, MacCannell (1976, p.187) indicated that *“an authentic experience involves... participation in a collective ritual”*. As each individual's involvement offers him/her unique possibilities, each of them has the ability to see the world through a unique perspective (Heidegger 1996). As such, the uniqueness of the possibilities flowing from those unique perspectives is thought to be the basis of authenticity. This view is comparable to Cohen's (1979) stance that different individuals undergo different experiences, and these have different meanings for visitors or the society.

2.4.2.4.1 The dimensions of existential authenticity

Wang (1999) has stated that existential authenticity can be split into two dimensions: intra-personal and inter-personal authenticity. Intra-personal authenticity is concerned with the 'bodily feelings' for example relaxation, refreshment, entertainment, sensual pleasures, sensation-seeking, play, excitement and so on (Lett 1983; Cohen 1985; Mergen 1986; Veijola and Jokinen 1994; Wang 1999). These bodily pleasures can also include features of a ritual (Graburn 1983). Bodily experience, for example during hiking in the Adirondacks and rock climbing in the Red River Gorge, were seen to include the physical effects of sun, rain, wind, muscle ache and the texture of the trail or rock (Rickly-Boyd 2012; Vidon 2015). The bodily feelings may also include hardship, fatigue, and trouble (Digance 2003; Lulk 2012) as can be experienced during a pilgrimage which includes the physical act of walking. The pilgrimage can therefore be seen as a transformed journey filled with personal meaning (Digance 2006; Shepherd 2015) with the body aspect consisting of the sensual as well as the symbolic. Wang (1999) articulated that feelings, pleasures and other bodily desires are likely to be released and consumed to a large extent. Moreover, Wang (1999) stated that

such bodily feelings, making the authentic self, can only be investigated for a very short period of time and it can be achieved through peak experiences including the body constraints present in the journey.

Intra-personal authenticity involves the “self-making” which is the motivation behind the travel. Giddens (1990) has stated that many people get a feeling of loss in their routine lives. Therefore, for such a person to be their authentic self, they have to turn to travel to get out of their mundane lives. Being away from one’s mundane life is an opportunity to discover one’s self. This implies that the act of walking during pilgrimage offers the potential for the discovery of self. The discovery of self itself may be seen an essential element of acquiring existential authenticity (Noy 2004; Shaffer 2004). In addition, the individual overcomes new challenges posed during the trip and this in turn allow him/her to find his/her new self (Yi et al. 2017). Yi et al. (2017) also added that there are two levels to the intra-personal authenticity. On the one hand, on a lower level, intra-personal authenticity is achieved when the body is freed from limitations and self-control imposed by one’s routine life, on the other hand, on a higher level it is achieved through extraordinary or extra-mundane experiences, for example by engaging in an adventure, leading to self-satisfaction and self-realisation.

The second dimension, inter-personal authenticity, includes ‘family ties’, for example where the family plans a holiday together to strengthen their ties and experience an authentic togetherness. Inter-personal authenticity also includes *communitas*. *Communitas* is categorised by ‘liminality’ which refers to any condition outside the day-to-day life (Turner 1974). It is contended that liminality during a pilgrimage allows for a new identity to be created and achieved since the pilgrim experiences a unique state of being free from his/her mundane life as well as to find his/her authentic self (Wang 1999; Kim and Jamal 2007). *Communitas* occurs among pilgrims who, during their journey and at the sacred site, deal with each other as social equals on grounds of their common humanity. This collectiveness involved in pilgrimage is capable of being a transformative experience for a person, thereby bringing awareness and clarity to one’s beliefs, faith, customs and role in life (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004). According to Turner and Turner (1978), this applies to both pilgrims and tourists as their journeys can be seen as a rite of passage, or a quasi-pilgrimage. While existential authenticity can be seen as having hedonic characteristics (Wang 1999), it may also exhibit eudaemonic characteristics. For instance, leaving behind one’s luxurious life, career, health to live on limited finance away from family (Kirillova and Lehto 2015) may promote one’s self-sufficiency and autonomy (Rickly-Boyd 2012) thereby making existential authenticity more attainable. As per Kim and Jamal (2007), existential authenticity is mostly associated with experiences which confer meaning, for example friendship and communal bonding, as opposed to seeking pleasure-seeking experiences.

2.4.3 Experiencing the authenticity of the place

2.4.3.1 The physical context of experiences

Similar to authenticity, the concept of place has increasingly gained importance in research (Budruk et al. 2008). Several studies in the tourism literature have considered the effects of authenticity on the perceptions of space and place (Cohen 1988; Lau 2010; Rickly-Boyd 2012; Castéran and Roederer 2013). Many scholars, doing research in existential authenticity, contend that place is important when considering tourist experiences (Spark 2002; Bonn et al. 2007; Kim and Jamal 2007; Belhassen et al. 2008; Buchmann et al. 2010). Altman and Low (1992) describe places as being spaces which are given meanings through social, group or personal processes. Likewise, Dixon and Durrheim (2000) stated that places are dynamic in nature and they are not only socially constituted but also constitutive of the social. Moore and Scott (2003) furthered this by stating that sense of place is the result of people giving meaning to what would otherwise be known as space.

The conceptual history of place began with the physical objects; it later moved to social constructivism and finally it was linked to meaning and identity (Belhassen et al. 2008). Both these concepts share similarities in their development. However, they are often detached from each other. Discussion of what place actually signifies revolve around the meaning associated with it, the experiences at the physical settings or the physical environment itself (Belhassen et al. 2008). Tuan (1977) puts forward the underlying idea behind the concept of places. According to him, places in fact have no meaning until we impose a meaning to them. According to Brandenburg and Carroll (1995), the social construction of the place meaning has expanded to recognise that the meaning of place also depends on one's experience of the environment of that place. Thus, the meaning of place depends on both the meaning that is socially constructed and the human experience within that setting (Manzo 2003). In the same vein, Kruger and Shannon (2000), recognising that the idea of place is complex, linked their study with lived experiences in a physical setting. These authors believed that place is focused on how humans combine environmental meanings, experiences, and physical settings.

It is important to note that as experiences are susceptible to changes in a physical environment, so are place meanings (Belhassen et al. 2008). The physical settings will help to complement the existential approach as identified by Wang (1999). Authenticity is indeed complex because it encompasses not only the lived experiences and the socially constructed meaning but it also includes the act of pilgrimage to a destination. Pilgrimage in the current study is an action undertaken by the pilgrims based on their religious beliefs, whereby the sacred place plays an important part because it involves the movement of the pilgrim to that sacred place. Vukonić (1996) argued that undertaking a pilgrimage is going to a place where the contents of that place involve religious rituals. As Singh (2014) put it, something is sensed in and around such sacred places; he terms this as the visible and invisible messages that bring meaning to life. There are also memories

and mythic sentiments that are attached to these sacred places (Singh 2014). According to Singh and Hashimoto (2011), a sacred space holds existential value and possesses spiritual power that is awakened through rituals and pilgrimage. As the act of pilgrimage occurs within a physical setting, the physical environment plays an important role in assessing the religious experiences involving the pilgrimage. Thus, the physical features essentially provide a means to legitimise the experience, enhance one's identity associated with the place and validate one's religious ideologies (Belhassen et al. 2008). The physical settings may include the landscape or panoramic view that the pilgrims encounter during the pilgrimage as well as the physical environment at the sacred site. The physical setting is an important component for an authentic experience and it also includes the atmosphere and the environment related to the landscape and place as well as the interaction of the individuals with their surroundings (Rickly-Boyd 2013).

While some individuals like to visit places with cultural, historical or social meaning, others may want to visit places that have religious significance (Belhassen et al. 2008), these are termed as sacred spaces. Jackson and Henrie (1983) defined a sacred space as a section of the earth's surface which individuals or group of individuals express their loyalty, devotion or esteem. Geopietry is the acknowledgment of a certain area being sacred, worthy of loyalty and devotion towards the perceived sacred space (Wright 1966). As Shackley (2001) explained, a sacred site/place not only exists within a sacred space but also consists of the sacred space within it. Sacred spaces may be visited for a number of reasons, for instance as part of their religion, for spiritual purposes, in order to experience the sacred in the traditional sense, for pilgrimages, amongst others.

Almost all societies have particular routes or locations which are either sacred or have religious significance (Shinde 2012). Pilgrims undertake pilgrimages to these sacred sites as they are attached to the sacred places. These places play a crucial role in the pilgrim's belief systems and religious identities. Religious sites or sacred places not only symbolise something of religious importance religiously, but they also form a platform where cultural exchange occurs (Luz 2008). Singh (2009) suggested that a place becomes a sacred place when there is a combination of sacralisation, inter-connectedness and ritualisation. Singh and Hashimoto (2011) recognised that sacred spaces play an important role, together with faith, to form a more complex web reflecting the holiness. In fact, Singh (1998) said that the sacred space, the landscape, and the symbolic geography generates a 'faithscape' encompassing the sacred place, time, meanings, rituals as well as embodying both the symbolic and tangible mental elements, thereby attempting to realise the individual's identity in the universe.

Belhassen et al. (2008) admitted that it would be wrong to see authenticity as being only subjective as this would weaken the effect of the physical places, together with the shared and the collectively authored meanings. Authenticity of the place is greatly sought after by those who want to experience a sacred site. It constitutes a vital component in the pilgrim's expectations which plays an important role in the quality of the resulting experience. A lack of authenticity does not

necessarily mean that the eventual quality of the experience is negatively affected (Shackley 2001). According to Jacobsen (2013), although many pilgrimage sites possess natural beauty, temples are often built there. For Hindus, visiting those sites, attending rituals or participating in pilgrimage festivals are considered to be of great importance for their religious lives: pilgrimage temples being the most important Hindu temples to attend while pilgrimage festivals are the most important festivals to them.

The attachment of the pilgrims to the sacred places is important because these places play a crucial role in the individual's belief systems and religious identities. In a way, place is important to legitimise one's experience, enhance one's identity connected to the place and legitimise one's religious ideology (Belhassen et al. 2008). Place identity however involves the connection of a person's own identity with the place (Proshansky 1978). Place identity includes both the physical settings and the social elements (Budruk et al. 2008). Although certain researchers acknowledge that place identity is associated with an individualistic dimension (Dixon and Durrheim 2000), others acknowledge that place is associated with a collective identity (Bonaiuto et al. 1996; Devine-Wright and Lyons 1997). Belhassen et al. (2008) went one step further than Wang (1999) by suggesting that authentic experiences are shaped by a set of different factors concerning a pilgrims' lived experiences: the religious belief behind the pilgrimage (the belief), the place being visited and its meaning (the place), and the activities that the pilgrims undertake (the action). Authentic experiences are also closely linked to one's individuality, autonomy, identity, self-development and self-realisation (Berman 1970). Therefore, it can be said that pilgrimage experiences include not only the physical but the mental circumstances of the pilgrim so that he/she can experience existential authenticity. Therefore, it is important to study the toured object together with the social structures connected to the experience.

2.5 COMMODITISATION OF EXPERIENCE

2.5.1 Background

Every culture is dynamic and it changes with time. A culture, belief or tradition can be changed by technological advancement which is making humankind evolve rapidly and become modernised. In this "high-tech" era, many societies are undergoing changes that are continuously transforming countries that are developed, developing and under-developed. Such advancement creates a higher impetus for cultural change. Tourism is renowned for having both positive and negative impacts on a local community or a country's economy. It can be seen as a business which economically benefits not only governments but also tourism operators, entrepreneurs and the host communities. However, having contact with a local community or a society, tourism can influence values and traditions to some extent. One interesting distinction which was brought to the literature was by Nunez (1989) who stated that when two distinct cultures are in contact for some time there is a

tendency that both start sharing some similarities through the borrowing process. This is normally called acculturation and cultural drift.

Over the last two decades, tourism researchers have paid attention to festival visitors' experiences by mainly focusing on the motivation, experience, satisfaction and evaluation of visitors (Lade and Jackson 2004; Morgan 2008; Abreu-Novais and Arcodia 2013; Lee 2014). The meaning and the role of the place in festival experiences is also a crucial element of the consumer experience (Morgan et al. 2010). However even though festivals may have positive impacts from the influence of tourism, tourists can also bring about some negative consequences such as loss of cultural authenticity, commoditisation of culture, or festivalisation (Getz 2007). According to Watson and Kopachevsky (1994), commoditisation is a trade process whereby activities and objects are balanced using their exchange-value: these can be exchanged for other benefits which arise from the commoditisation process. Commoditisation can also be in the sense of a fee-for-access to activities, i.e. participation in an activity or the purchase of goods involving a fee which then gives right to the payee to access the commodity (Redden 2016). It should be noted that the payment of a fee in return for an experience does not necessarily signify complete commoditisation, for example some visitors do not have to pay a fee at the gate per se, but this is subsumed in the price they pay for their package (Wall and Xie 2005). On another aspect, Redden (2016) stated that commoditisation allows objects as well as knowledge to be in circulation; this in a way promotes the attraction or destination which may have previously been regulated to maintain their sacred values. With an increase in commoditisation, local investors also benefit by producing more economic opportunities (Britton 1991).

2.5.2 The potential implications of commoditisation

2.5.2.1 *The positive impacts*

Cultural products are not necessarily destroyed by the process of commoditisation (Cohen 1988). Likewise, religious commoditisation does not trigger religious malaise or the re-invention of a new form of religion (Kitiarsa 2008). In fact, commoditisation may show the true self and the identity of the pastness when relating to culture (Xie 2003; Xie 2010). It is contended that commoditisation can have a positive contribution in terms of the re-emergence of tradition. This can happen due to the creation of a new kind of authenticity, 'emergent authenticity', which creates new meaning for the local people (Cohen 1988). This type of authenticity is negotiable and changeable, with its meaning susceptible to vary by time and context (Cohen 1995). Furthering this, Cohen added that tourism products, viewed as artificial by the local community, can over time be seen as authentic representations of the local culture. An example here can be the Canadian Inuit's traditional art carvings which have been hugely stimulated by tourism demand. The production of these souvenir crafts are of a high standard providing the Inuit with not only a way to earn a good living from the demand for the carvings but also a means to maintain cultural identity without affecting or diluting

the authenticity (Graburn 1976). The mass production of cultural objects with little resemblance to the original indicates the sign of inauthentic but the re-emergence of crafts or new arts can be economically beneficial to host communities. These new artefacts do not necessarily mean that they are less authentic as compared to previous cultural periods. For some tourists, commercially reproduced products of the past may be enough to term these as authentic products (Bobot 2012).

It is often seen that visitors buy souvenirs and artefacts when visiting an attraction, and as many attractions are commercialised and it is not surprising to see this at some sacred sites (Shackley 2001). For example, in Lourdes, the whole community relies on the sales of religious objects for their living. In addition, referring to the vast selection of souvenirs at Knock in Ireland, Shackley (2006) has stated that it is probable that there is a demand for souvenirs and for this reason these are sold to cater to the needs of the visitors' expectations. At the same time, the purchases may help to provide an authentic experience to the visitors when attending the Mass for prayer because a purchase carried out at the sacred site may have a more powerful meaning to the visitor than if it were purchased outside the sacred space (Shackley 2006). In fact, at a religious site the experience sought is the maintenance of the 'spirit of place' (Shackley 2001). The extent to which the commoditised objects at Knock affect the authenticity of the site is uncertain. For Cohen (1988), the absence of commoditisation can be one of the tests of authenticity. However, such an assumption is not always true. For instance, a visitor or a pilgrim at a shrine can still have an authentic experience if the individual visits the site, attends the Mass and the prayers, and finally buys a souvenir which looks like tasteless kitsch (Shackley 2006). However, the view differs between scholars. For instance, Nolan and Nolan (1992) have stated that while Protestants and secular pilgrims with puritanical opinions would be stunned to see over-commercialisation at a sacred site, Catholic pilgrims would not. Importantly, purchasing a souvenir at a sacred site may have more value for some visitors or pilgrims. This is also supported by Eade (1992) who said that location is an important aspect for the purchase of a souvenir as it may have some sacred associations.

Certain religious sites are non-profitable with little capability of producing revenue. With a rise of visitors during festivals, the purchase of souvenirs can be an important ingredient for visitors to make their time memorable. It would give them a reason to remember their journey, and it would remind them of the experience they had at the sacred site during that time. For some visitors, it may only be a souvenir but for others it may reflect a deep spiritual and religious meaning to buy such items at a sacred site. In such circumstances, it may be useful for site managers to generate income through the sale of prayer items, souvenirs or some artefacts. The funds from the sale of items can have various uses, for example for the upkeep of the site or as donation to the poor. However, such activities may also have some negative impacts on the site as the place itself loses the sense of meaning when rituals and artefacts are commoditised for visitors (Vukonić 2002). Keeping the site away from sales may be seen as a good practice as it maintains the sense of the place and spirituality thereby preventing commoditisation. Actually, the commoditisation of a religious site is dependent on the lens of the individual (Timothy and Olsen 2006).

Xie (2010) has pointed out that the development of tourism helps, to a certain extent, to bring about change in the authentic culture and, as a result, whilst authenticity is regarded as a negotiable concept, the concept of commoditisation positively appears in the quest of authenticity. Shannon (1995) gave one such example when referring to the staged aboriginal Maori's case in the New Zealand indicating that fifty percent of their traditions and rituals would have been lost if they were not performed for tourists. Another such example is the Bamboo-beating dance in Hainan, China, where it was noted that even though the dance of the Li community has lost its original meanings over time, from the pressure put by the Chinese communist government, it has been kept as a symbolic facet of the bamboo beating dance where the dance performance not only shows the identity and pride of the community but also gives these people the chance to display their aboriginal culture alongside the tourism development (Xie 2010). Tourism development also helps the local community. For example, Ahmed (1992) identified that residents of Mecca have, for many centuries, tended to the needs of Muslim pilgrims, thereby earning a living out of it. These examples show that some cultures have benefited from the effect of commoditisation. On one hand, it allows a culture to rejuvenate and on the other hand a 'dying' culture can re-survive and re-emerge to gain benefits that are crucial for their existence and sustainability.

Within a very simple context, tourism can be viewed as a business. Notably, Pearce (1989) stated that key stakeholders involved in the tourism industry such as the Government, tourism operators and the host communities mostly contemplate the nature of tourism development for its economic gains. For example, the objectives of tourism operators are to sell destinations by creating deals and packages which can also be customised according to the tourist's needs. These sales are projected in such a way that the core resources such as the excellent weather conditions, the flora and fauna and the unique cultural elements of the destination are portrayed to attract tourists. Most of these sales are done to foster the experiences of tourists. In fact, there is an exchange process between the experiences sought by visitors and the hosts' economic resources gained through the sale of such packages, lodgings, taxation and the list goes on (Hinch and Higham 2005).

2.5.2.2 *The negative impacts*

Although some authors see the positive side of tourism as helping local communities to survive or maintain local traditions, others believe that tourism development is a necessary evil (Boissevain 1996a, 1996b; Macleod 1999). Bobot (2012) has argued that commoditisation, through the production and selling of mementos can be viewed as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it can lead to profits for the local community and, on the other hand it can cause mass production leading to a loss of authenticity, a deviation from its original meaning and corrupt the cultural essence of the destination. Along the same lines, Greenwood (1989) stated that even though tourism brings about creative changes in local cultures, meanings may be lost through the commodification of culture. Therefore the process of commoditisation can be seen as having negative effects on the authenticity of sacred sites and festivals thereby altering their meaning and relevance for the local

community, degrading the experience, threatening the traditional culture and identity building, causing a loss of cultural uniqueness and downgrading local culture merely to a series of events and modifying or destroying the authentic nature of places and cultures (Goulding 2000; Meethan 2001; Vukonić 2002; Hinch and Higham 2005; Richards 2007; Getz 2007; Kasim 2011; Bobot 2012; Qurashi 2017). As a result, the local community may feel discontent and tourists' experiences damaged (Yang and Wall 2009).

With an upsurge in the number of tourists over time, a destination not only benefits from tourism but can also suffer from it. For instance, Qurashi (2017) noted that many issues may arise due to an increase of tourist commodities at religious destinations, such as issues relating to the commoditisation of the pilgrimage, the objective and subjective authenticity and the waning of the pilgrims' values and spiritual experience. When a destination becomes a tourism product, it may also affect human values (Henderson 2010). Therefore, when destinations are viewed as tradable goods, they are no longer respected (Qurashi 2017), and they lose their authenticity (Shepherd 2002). In the case of Mecca, Qurashi (2017) suggested that in dealing with an increase in the number of pilgrims, modern infrastructure, highly-branded services and technology were put in place. He stated that these new additions have caused the spiritual experiences of pilgrims to change into luxury tourist experiences, thereby threatening the traditional pilgrimage and its teachings. In other words, the authenticity of the sacredness is fading. Undertaking the pilgrimage, Hajj, and visiting the site, Mecca, according to White (2005), is not only about one's beliefs, rituals and principles anymore, but a symbolic commodity that matches the pilgrims' status, lifestyle, enjoyment and 'modesty'.

In the case of commoditisation of festivals, this impact may lead to what is called 'placeless' festivals. This is a place with no specific attachment or no authentic cultural experience (MacLeod 2006). Additionally, with existing religious traditions being sold as commodities in return for profits, the traditions are being hollowed out (Lau 2000; Carrette and King 2005). This is particularly important to note as the cultural experience of tourists remains the core aspect of a destination or an activity such as festival, and if commoditisation threatens the authenticity of the festival, it may have serious repercussions on the festival. In such circumstances, Goffman (1959) has proposed that the hosts try to find the right balance between their private lives and their tourism performance by structuring their lives such that they perform at the front stages and escape from the visitors at the back stages.

Some scholars portray tourism as having bastardisation characteristics (Wilson 1993; Wood and Picard 1997; Shepherd 2002). Notably, with the rise of tourism, a destination that was pristine and authentic can become blemished and commoditised (Shepherd 2002). As such, the destination undergoes a process of cultural commoditisation where there is a degradation of the aesthetic quality of the cultural traditions and products. It can be noted that the issue of commoditisation is often linked to authenticity and both are frequently debated in literature (Cole 2007; Xie 2010;

Bobot 2012). Authenticity is perhaps a secret ingredient of the tourism experience, because tourists often seek authenticity by looking for something not usual in their daily lives. As the debate over authenticity continues, this has also given rise to another issue concerning the extent to which the experience or the site can be taken to be authentic when it has been marketed and sold as an overall tourist product. This implies that once a destination, a festival or a cultural artefact, becomes part of the tourism system, it turns into a commodity which has a value associated with price. As per Greenwood (1989), once a culture turns into a commodity, there is a loss of meaning and significance for the host. This in turn affects the authenticity of the culture as perceived by the tourists.

Tourism can also be viewed as a powerful agent that conveys changes. Cohen (1988) has asserted this by saying that some cultures are staged for the consumption of tourists. For example, certain forms of culture like a festival, an event or even the Arts are adapted to suit the tourism industry. The content of events is altered to match what the tourists view as the authentic local culture (Greenwood 1989; Waterman 1998). Some cultures can also become commercial products if it is being supported by the host residents (Simpson 1993). For example, it happens when the residents tend to offer the product in a presentable manner as part of a package for the consumption of the tourism industry.

According to Swanson and Timothy (2012), souvenirs are an important element of the experience voyage because they help to preserve and remember that experience. Trading or even looting substantial amounts of artworks and handicrafts, and then bringing them to the home ports were not infrequent by travellers during earlier times (Horner 1993; Stanley 2000). It has been observed that now, during Christian pilgrimage, pilgrims or religious travellers usually like to accumulate relics which are attached to the sacred sites, for example in Rome, the Holy Land and Constantinople (Teague 2000; Tythacott 2000; Shackley 2006). As such, souvenirs contribute billions of revenue in every corner of the world as it is highly consumed by tourists (Cohen 1995; Evans 2000; Timothy 2005). Notably, souvenirs are subject to further research within tourism studies as it is viewed as a salient element of the tourism industry (Swanson and Timothy 2012). Souvenirs can be contextualised into two facets: meanings and commodities. From the seller's or the supplier's point of view, it is just an object that has to be exchanged for value, thus it is viewed as a commodity with less emotional attachment to the souvenirs. From the purchasers' point of view, when the object is a tangible souvenir, it provides them with a symbolic remembrance which marks an event or of an experience. When it is characterised as an intangible object, it simply gives them an experience that last for a very short time. Likewise, Peters (2011) has stated that souvenirs serve as a description of an event, place or some experience which initiates some memories at some time or place and are normally placed in the house so that they are seen by families and friends paying a visit.

One should not discard the fact that those who are on holiday often demand culture and authentic souvenirs to consume. Greenwood (1989) therefore suggests that in making tourist attractions more appealing, local culture is being modified or even destroyed, making it worthless for those who had a belief in it. However, this is not always a rule of thumb. Similarly, religious or ceremonial artefacts are being produced in more and more high quantities and sold to tourists as part of the process of cultural commoditisation (Sharpley 2008). Due to its mass production, there may be loss in the traditional forms and designs because the items have been transformed into simple and less sophisticated forms which are produced for the consumption of tourists. This therefore engenders a loss of meaning and significance. The leverage of tourism can cause local people to be extracted from the real or genuine meaning of their homes, lives and culture. It may also cause a loss of cultural uniqueness (Hinch and Higham 2005). One such example is the mass production of the different sizes, colours and designs of the 'raksha devil' dance masks of Sri Lanka for tourists. These were originally used by the Sinhalese to denote different images of deities and demons but now due to commoditisation, the masks no longer have the same cultural meaning and authenticity (Simpson 1993).

It can therefore be said that the process of commoditisation can have some influences - which can change, significantly amend or even destroy cultural uniqueness - on the cultural perspective of a community in a destination. Greenwood (1982), in his article on 'Cultural Authenticity', says that once the cultural systems are questioned, they lose their genuineness or authentic experiences of the "real". As such, it seems that the culture is bound to undergo major transformation or even collapse. In this regard, Boorstin (1964) has asserted that tourism leads to pseudo-events which can cause the failure to reveal the true culture of the place and as a consequence the authenticity of the destination and the attractions can be at stake and may be lost (MacCannell 1976). In such a scenario, the tourists who quest for authenticity no longer feel the "unique" experience at a destination. As a result, they tend to substitute such a destination with another one given that the tourism industry is highly competitive and tourists have lots of options from which to choose. Therefore, the destination may be unlikely to sustain its tourism performance and the host community may also lose cultural authenticity and its identity (Hinch and Higham 2005). In order to prevent such negative impacts, it is essential to devise strategies to prevent this from happening to the destination so that it can maintain a sustainable tourism performance and also maintain its cultural integrity. Thus, the government needs to play a very key role for the development of the tourism industry by implementing specific policies and strategies for the upkeep of the industry in a destination (Pearce 1989; Page 2003).

Some cultural attractions and destinations are more sensitive, compared to others, for instance, religious sites and festivals which are developed for tourism. According to Greenwood (1982), the invention of ceremonies, the adaptation of elements from the outside and the reinvention of the ceremonies for sacred and secular reasons are part of all societies. All cultures adapt to change with time given that both time and culture are not frozen. Some studies demonstrate that pilgrimage

tourism is experiencing drastic change, for example through the commoditisation of religion through tourism (Reader 2006; Gorski et al. 2012). In order to show some clear distinction, the Hajj will be used as an example. It has been observed that the experience of this pilgrimage has been modernised over the years to cater for the needs of the growing demand (Timothy and Olsen 2006). For example, there has been the introduction of the latest camera surveillance technology to ensure the safety of the pilgrims and the use of motor-coaches that have air-conditioned services to facilitate movement of people between religious sites in Mecca. Additionally, the Al-Masjid Al-Haram mosque has been equipped with air-conditioning facilities to make it more comfortable for the pilgrims (Ahmed 1992) and further investment in facilities and infrastructure is being carried out by the Saudi Arabian government (Qurashi 2017). The airport and transportation modes such as charter flights have been improved and made available to increase accessibility to millions of pilgrims who visit Mecca (Metcalf 1990; Ahmed 1992; Timothy and Olsen 2006). There are more and more tour operators and travel agencies who sell tours for the Hajj (Ahmed 1992). People on pilgrimage also consider shopping and sightseeing as an important element (Aziz 2001). All these aspects show that there has indeed been commoditisation which is in turn heavily criticised by both the scholars of Islam and the fundamentalist Muslims who consider that the Hajj has lost its meaning and has been diluted. The Government of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi ruling family have even been blamed not only for commoditising the sacred experience but also for secularising the sacred space (Siddiqui 1986; Delaney 1990; Timothy and Olsen 2006).

Another salient example of commoditisation of religion through tourism concerns tourism related to Buddhism. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has considered it important to review the situation in Asia (ESCAP 2003). In certain ways, some issues related to the development of the tourism related to Buddhism are similar to the development of other types of international tourism, for example in relation to the development of hospitality services, infrastructure and access (Timothy and Olsen 2006). In Bhutan, tourism related to Buddhism is the main type of international tourism, therefore the major issue for the government is to carefully develop, manage and promote tourism without negatively affecting the sacredness and sanctity of the religious institutions and festivals (ESCAP 2003). Similar concerns arise in countries like Tibet and Myanmar where there is deliberate commoditisation by the government to draw foreign exchange (Kleiger 1992; Philip and Mercer 1999).

2.5.2.3 The attitudes of residents towards tourism development

Tourism benefits the government, organisations and businesses that provide tourism services. However, the advantages from tourism can rarely be achieved without incurring cost. Where a destination is being marketed to achieve a high number of tourists, there is a danger that the destination is over promoted at the expense of the destination (Caust and Vecco 2017). In other words, it is true that tourism may help to create jobs, develop the destination and raise funds for restoration or conservation of the destination; it may also lead to the destruction or the undermining

of the unique features of the local culture. In fact, the local people can be seen to engage in a trade-off between the advantages that tourism brings and the negative consequences it produces. Over time, the local community may become dependent on tourism in order to sustain. The converse is also true; the tourism industry also depends on the hospitality of the locals (Zamani-Farahani and Musa 2012). When the locals are happy, it projects a positive image of the destination which is then shared by the tourists (Snaith and Haley 1999). Therefore, the residents' attitude can influence tourist satisfaction leading to repeat visitations (Swarbrooke 1993; Sheldon and Abenoja 2001). Although the residents may support tourism development, they may also share concerns on the negative impacts (Sarareh and Badaruddin 2013). For example, an increase in tourism can compromise the destination's natural/physical environment through overcrowding, traffic and parking, erosion, noise and fouling pollution, increase in overuse of natural resources, littering and insufficient infrastructure, for example sewerage (Orbasli 2000; Caust and Vecco 2017). Additionally, Bâc (2012) stated that the peaceful atmosphere or the tranquillity reigning at the destination may also be destroyed if the number of visitors is significantly increased. The impact of this is that visitors stop visiting the destination as it is no longer attractive (Caust and Vecco 2017). As such, the residents' perceptions can be important in assessing the success of a destination (Andriotis 2005).

The attitudes of residents towards tourism development can be categorised in terms of social, economic and environmental dimensions (Mason and Cheyne 2000; Andereck et al. 2005; Dyer et al. 2007). Though the physical impacts of an increase in tourists on the environment may be apparent, the impact on the local community may be less obvious (Caust and Vecco 2017). An increase in the number of tourists is also deemed to pressure local culture as there will be a need to provide the same degree of facilities, service and so on, to everyone at the destination (González Tirados 2011). Another impact may be that everything becomes homogenised to meet the needs of the mass (Caust and Vecco 2017). Therefore, there needs to be a balance between the residents' perceptions concerning the benefits and costs of tourism for the tourism industry's success (Andriotis and Vaughan 2003). This balance is essential for the existence of a harmonious relationship between the local people, places and tourists, and for those organisations providing tourism services (Zhang et al. 2006). If there is no such balance, the attractions of the destination are likely to be affected in order to serve the needs of the tourist, thereby losing its inherent characteristic or local culture (Caust and Vecco 2017). The study of residents' attitudes towards tourism and tourists is particularly important because it centres on the welfare of the local population (Lankford and Howard 1994) especially in destinations seeking to increase tourism (Sharpley 2014) and also because it ensures the success and sustainability of tourism development in places where tourism plays a significant role in the economy, as in Mauritius.

Local perceptions of tourism development have been analysed in the past using theoretical models; one of which is Doxey's Irridex model. Doxey (1975) has recognised that residents go through four different stages of attitudes as a result of an increase in tourism development, starting from

euphoria and moving on through apathy, annoyance and ending on antagonism. From the model, it can be said that residents not only pass through this sequence of reactions but also their perceptions change with their experience. This model gives an indication as to the possible residents' feelings towards tourism at different levels of tourism flow. However, this model is seen to be too simple as there are local factors which needed to be considered, for example the nature of local community and visitors and also how the destination is managed (Butler 1980).

Religions offer entertainment to tourists not only through the attractions of religious sites and spaces but also by staging performances. However, local hosts can take offense if tourists behave irreverently. For example, tourists visiting the Western wall in Palestine in the 19th Century did not have much respect for Jews and they were unaware of their rituals. This made the Jews unhappy at being stared at by the giggling visitors (Shepherd 1987). Following this argument, there is a need to understand what the local Hindus in Mauritius characterise as an authentic religious experience and what are the characteristics that should not be destroyed by the tourism development so that the meaning of the religious festival and site is not cheapened and that the authenticity is preserved while meeting the goal of commoditisation.

2.6 A CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS OF THE LITERATURE ANALYSIS

2.6.1 Introduction

This study aimed to critically evaluate the nature of the religious experiences offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri to the local Hindu participants and their perceptions of the possible impacts on these religious experiences resulting from any future commoditisation of the Festival and its site. Figure 2.2 presents a framework that conceptualises the key factors identified from the literature on the religious experiences generated from religious festivals, pilgrimages and at sacred sites as well as the authenticity of experiences and the positive and negative impacts of commoditisation on experiences. This framework therefore helped to understand and clarify the content under investigation and acted as a guide in the development of the questionnaire.

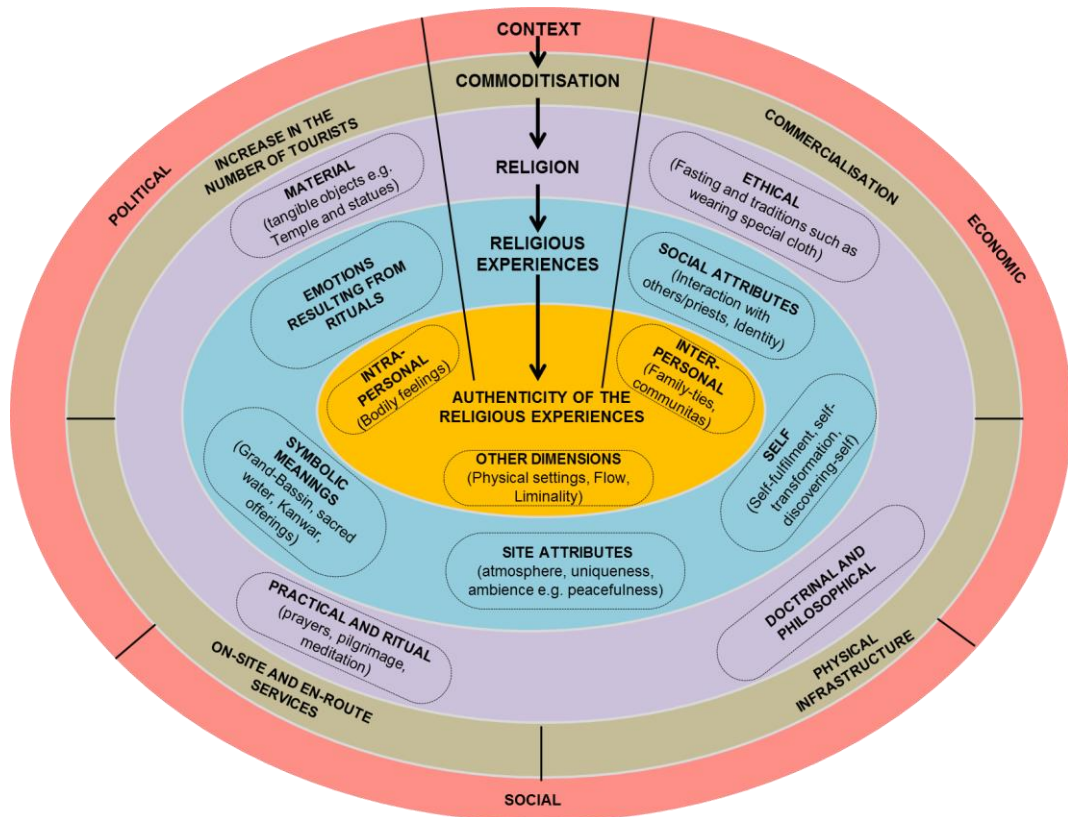


Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework

2.6.2 The context

The first component of this conceptualisation is given in the outer layer which focuses on the context. This layer is composed of (1) the political context, (2) the economic context and (3) the social context. Each of these contexts was explained in *Chapter 1* (see Section 1.2.2). These three contexts act as external forces and may influence the society (defined by what is celebrated, who celebrates and when/how to celebrate) and what happens in the society.

The political context relates to the control of what happens in a society by virtue of the laws, legislation and the allocation of public funds to different activities. In Mauritius, the political context is one of freedom of conscience, creed and religious belief and tolerance to different religious-ethnic groups. These are considered to be key democratic rights, freedoms and obligations pertaining to the Constitution that give people the opportunity to practise and celebrate their religion, culture and identity. The political context in Mauritius is one of support for local festivals and celebrations. This may be for economic considerations or in order to stimulate political interest by supporting them as a means of influencing public opinion in favour of the politicians or in order to stimulate the growth of economic activities such as tourism. This is evident in the case of the Mauritian religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (see Section 1.2.3.3).

The economic context consists of the different economic activities that take place within the country and the nature of the economy. Mauritius is a middle-income country within which the main economic activities are tourism, manufacturing/textile and financial/banking. These activities directly provide the income and wealth of the country and indirectly through linkages into the rest of the economy. The success of these economic activities are constrained and/or boosted by the external context of the global economy and the workings of the internal (country) economy. In the context of this research, the important factor is a wish to encourage the growth of the tourism industry. As the Government of Mauritius has envisaged promoting cultural tourism to diversify the tourism portfolio, there is a possibility of commoditising the Festival and its site for more tourists. From an economic perspective, an increase in the number of tourists can stimulate economic growth, externality benefits (more jobs and business opportunities for local people) and economic regeneration of the site.

In a social context, the Festival and its site represent the continuity of belief, culture, traditions and place identity for the local Hindu community. Additionally, it provides a range of other benefits such as enhancing social interaction and ties with close ones and others, strengthening social/community cohesion and fostering tolerance in the society. A strategy of building up the tourism sector by the Mauritian Government, by developing the cultural product offer, may have social implications on Mauritian society.

Overall, the three contexts of the conceptual framework represent the general environmental situation in which any festival/event operates in a society and may influence the way the Festival is operated, managed and delivered to the local Hindu residents.

2.6.3 The nature of commoditisation of a religious festival

The second component of this conceptualisation focuses on commoditisation. In this study, commoditisation consists of ‘governmental’ actions/developments that would result in a rise in the number of tourists, not of the Hindu faith, at the site and along the pilgrimage route during the Festival. The outcomes of commoditisation may include the following: more physical infrastructure development (e.g. road enlargement, increase in parking slots, change in landscape and deforestation); more ‘on-site’ and ‘en-route’ services (toilet and bath facilities, on-site cleaning staffs); and commercialisation (e.g. hawkers selling items, hotel and guest houses). Such developments could impact upon the religious experiences of the Mauritian Hindus participating in the Festival, the nature of the religious experiences and the authenticity of those religious experiences. Therefore, the research content included the identification of what changes commoditisation might bring about and whether those changes were considered acceptable to the Mauritian stakeholders: the religious authorities, the public sector and the Hindu residents of the island.

2.6.4 The Hindu religion

Moving inwards the content of the next layer focuses on the Hindu religion as a synthesis of the relevant parts of the literature review suggested that this would best be investigated based on Smart's (1996, 1998) model. This model would help to develop an understanding of the way that Hindus perceive their religion, view 'others', and the importance they attach to their traditions, customs and rites. Hindu values are important in shaping the nature of their perceived religious experiences and how they might react to the potential development of the Festival for more tourists. Such development may not entirely affect every dimension of the Hindu religion, but it will have an impact. For instance, the 'narrative/mythic dimension' (e.g. sacred text) of religion has not been included on the basis that commoditisation will not have any impact on it. However, other dimensions such as 'doctrinal and philosophical', 'experiential and emotional', 'material', 'social and institutional', 'ethical dimension', 'practical and ritual' will be modified or adjusted to meet the growing demands of tourists at the Festival and site.

2.6.5 The religious experiences

The third layer inwards put emphasis on religious experiences. The understanding of the nature of the religious experiences in the context of a Hindu religious festival is the main gap that the current study seeks to fill. Thus, this component focuses on developing an understanding of the local religious authorities' views on the religious experiences offered by the Festival as well as the religious experiences sought and gained by the Mauritian Hindu participants who had participated in the Festival. The literature review resulted in the identification of Levitt's (1981) model and Kotler's (1994) conceptualisation of the product levels (the *core religious experiences*, the *actual Festival product* and the *augmented nature of the religious experiences*), as a good theoretical underpinning for the study of the 'experience' component. While the marketing view of experiences and products has not often been used in religious research, it has been accepted and used in the tourism literature (Middleton 1988; Swarbrooke 1995; Saraniemi and Kylanen 2011; Mehmetoglu and Normann 2013; Byrd et al. 2016).

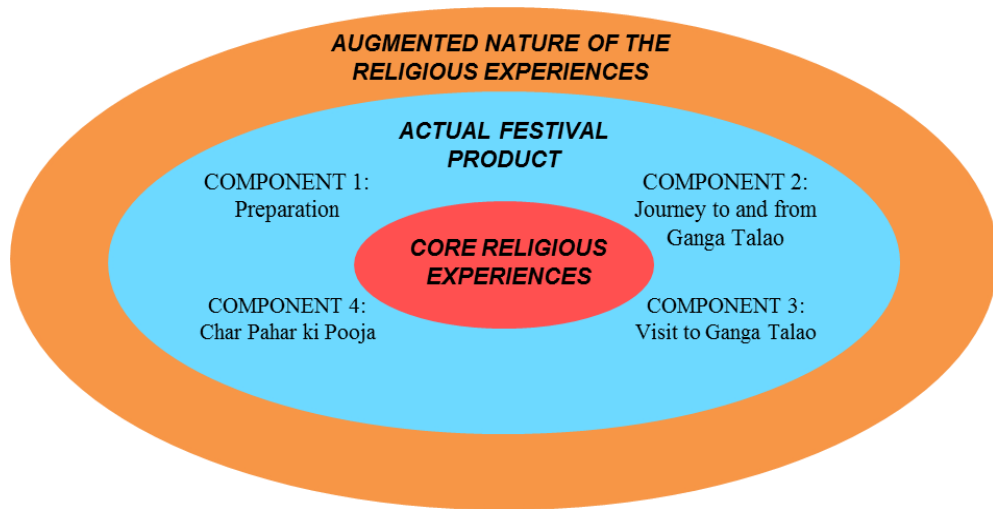


Figure 2.3: The total religious experiences of the Festival

The literature review established this theoretical approach, based on the three layers of product, as the guide in relation to establishing the views and actions of the religious authorities and the Mauritian Hindu participants in the Festival in terms of:

- * *Core religious experiences* - the main religious benefits/outcomes the local Hindu participants gain/seek to gain through their participation in the Festival. In general, the resulting religious benefits or outcomes help them to satisfy/achieve their personal religious needs.
- * The *actual Festival product* - what the Festival is offering to the local Hindu participants that gives them the *core religious experiences*. In essence, it relates to what they do and experiences pertaining to the four components of the Festival: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja.
- * The *augmented nature of the religious experiences* - what heightens the ‘normal’ or ‘mundane’ experiences of the local Hindu participants during the Festival. These can add value to the *core religious experiences* and have the potential to make the Festival experiences distinct from other Hindu religious festivals and activities.

In addition, within the consideration of the experiences provided by the Festival, Shackley’s (2001) model was recast in terms of the four stages (components) of the Festival – the *actual Festival product*. Commoditisation is most likely to affect the perceived religious experiences for the participants during the travel to and from Ganga Talao and at the sacred site.

2.6.6 The authenticity of religious experiences

The fourth component of the conceptualisation relates to the perceived authenticity of religious experiences. If the Festival and its site are transformed into a tourist attraction, through the encouragement of more tourists, this is a conduit for commoditisation. It is therefore important to assess what features of the Festival experiences are valued by the local Hindu participants and therefore need to be preserved and maintained so that the perceived authentic religious experiences are not negatively affected. In this context, Wang's (1999) typology was identified as a means to understand the key variables of the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* for the local Hindu participants. In particular, their perceived existential authenticity was the focus of this research. As discussed earlier in Section 2.4.2.4.1, the two dimensions of existential authenticity are intra-personal and inter-personal authenticity. On the one hand, intrapersonal authenticity relates to (a) the 'bodily feelings' that one experiences during an activity and (b) the 'self-making' where an individual is being true to himself/herself or discovers himself/herself while being away from his/her daily routine lives. On the other hand, interpersonal authenticity is when someone experiences an authentic togetherness as well as an opportunity to strengthen ties with family members and others. Therefore, the research helps to evaluate what the participants consider as contributing to the existential authenticity of religious experiences during their last participation in the Festival. It also identifies what features of the Festival need to be preserved so that the perceived authenticity of the religious experiences is not diminished through any future commoditisation.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter 2 has critically reviewed the literature to provide insights from existing studies and research in order to underpin the investigation into the current context and content of the research. This review ends with a statement of how the critical review of the literature has facilitated a synthesis and allowed the conceptualisation of what is relevant to the research and how it is relevant. This conceptualisation, and the theories selected, underpins what is included in the study. Firstly, Smart's (1996, 1998) model of religion was chosen as a good basis to understand the nature of the Hindu religion. The dimensions from this model are conceptualised in the conceptual framework (see Figure 2.2) and informed the design of the qualitative interview guides and the quantitative questionnaire. Secondly, this study uses product theory from marketing and, as such, is based on Levitt's (1981) typology and Kotler's (1994) conceptualisation of product levels, see Section 2.3.3.2. The adoption of this theoretical framework within the context of a religious and pilgrimage festival is new and is considered to be a good underlying theoretical framework for guiding and understanding the nature of the religious experiences sought and gained by the local Hindu participants during the Festival. Thirdly, the research recasts Shackley's (2001) model to explore the activities that the local Hindu respondents undertake during the Festival as part of the *actual Festival product* (the four components of the Festival: the preparation, the journey to and

from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja) and the level of importance attached to the activities undertaken in contributing to their religious experiences. This approach sought to assess in detail the behaviours of the local Hindu participants and the importance of those behaviours in contributing to their religious experiences. Fourthly, existential authenticity derived from Wang's (1999) typology is argued to be a good theoretical underpinning to the understanding of the experiences/feelings of participants during the activities they undertake as part of the Festival. Fifthly, the literature analysis provides a guide on understanding the outcomes of commoditisation, resulting from an increase in the number of tourists, see Section 2.5. These outcomes are thought to impact upon the authenticity of religious experiences, thus affecting the sacredness and religious experiences for the participants. Overall, the research was guided by two conceptual frameworks for the data collection and analysis, see Figures 2.2 and 2.3.

The next chapter, the methodology, sets out and explains how the conceptualisation was translated into practice through a mixed methods study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter, *Chapter 2*, critically reviewed the relevant literature and established the conceptual frameworks to guide the current study. The purpose of *Chapter 3* is to explain and appraise the overall methodological foundations underpinning the research and the methods employed to meet the aim and objectives of this study. An overall sequential mixed methods approach in three stages was adopted, as illustrated in Figure 3.1. Whilst Stage One, an initial exploratory research, was conducted in the United Kingdom, both Stages Two and Three, based on qualitative and quantitative methods respectively, took place concurrently in Mauritius as part of the main research.

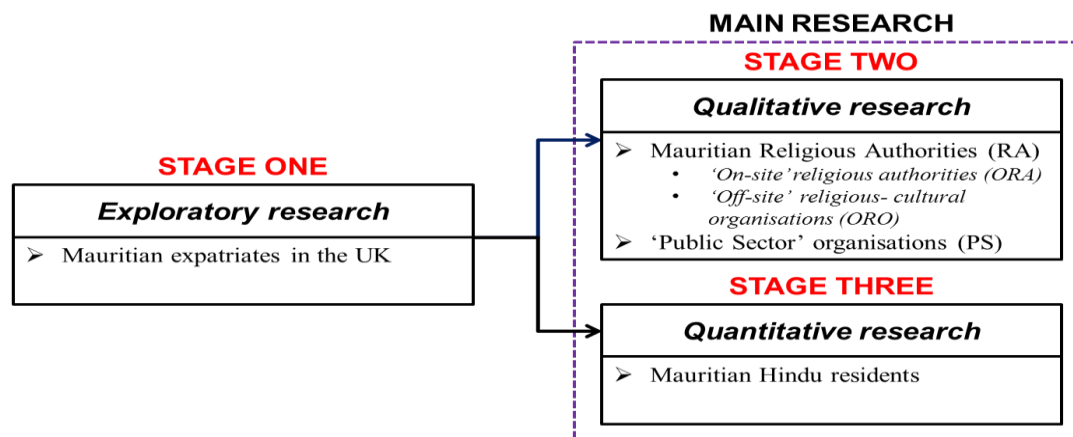


Figure 3.1: Sequential mixed methods approach for the study

This chapter has five main sections. Section 3.2 outlines the aim and objectives of the research. Thereafter, an overview of the key stakeholders is reported in Section 3.3, including a brief description of stakeholder theory. Next, Section 3.4 highlights the research approach and the philosophical stance. The purpose, design and the key findings of Stage One are given in Section 3.5. Lastly, Section 3.6 provides a detailed description of the main research for Stages Two and Three.

3.2 THE RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to critically evaluate the nature of the religious experiences offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) to the Mauritian Hindu participants and their perceptions of the possible impacts on these religious experiences resulting from any future commoditisation of the Festival and its site.

To achieve the aim of this study, five objectives are identified:

1. To critically review academic literature in order to identify key factors that may potentially influence the nature of the religious experiences for a religious festival, pilgrimage and at a sacred site. The review, covering the nature of the experiences, authenticity and commoditisation, is to act as a guide to the primary research and the subsequent interpretation of the findings.
2. To identify and explore the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities as to what they perceive to constitute and influence the religious experiences and the authenticity sought by the Mauritian Hindu participants from the Festival.
3. To identify and explore the views of Mauritian Hindus who had participated in the Festival as to what constitutes and influences their religious experiences and the authenticity of those experiences arising from their participation in the Festival.
4. To determine the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities, the 'Public Sector' organisations and the Mauritian Hindus who had attended the festival on the potential commoditisation of the Festival and its site (by using the Festival and its site to increase the number of tourists visiting Mauritius) and the potential impacts on the religious experiences of Mauritian Hindus participating in the Festival and its site.
5. To undertake a critical evaluation synthesising the literature and the qualitative and quantitative research findings to underpin a conceptual framework that furthers our understanding of the perceived effects of commoditisation on the core, augmented and authenticity of the religious experiences.

3.3 STAKEHOLDER THEORY

3.3.1 Applying stakeholder theory in the research

As noted above the research is based around the three sets of potential stakeholders who have an interest in the future development of the Festival. This sub-section does not attempt to discuss or reiterate the popular discourses on stakeholder theory that are well-documented in the management literature, it simply provides an overview of its application in the current research and ascertains the key stakeholders who are/were involved in the study and why they were chosen for the research. In addition, a list of other potential members/representatives from each set of stakeholders has been provided followed by the reasons for their non-involvement in the current research.

Different scholars have defined stakeholders differently. From a business-oriented perspective, Freeman (1984) has provided a broad definition of a stakeholder as being either an individual or a group who can affect, or may be affected by, the accomplishment of an organisation's objectives. In the literature, these objectives are mostly focused on the maximisation of profits for the business and/or the shareholders (Freeman 1984; Donaldson and Preston 1995). Within a festival management context, stakeholders play a vital role and seek to meet their objectives. Even though each stakeholder may have distinct sets of goals, interests and agendas, their objective is for the Festival to be successful, although they may have different reasons for their desire to succeed. To achieve this, the multiple stakeholders, although having different overall objectives, come together and engage in the planning, managing and delivering of the Festival to foster its current and future sustainable development.

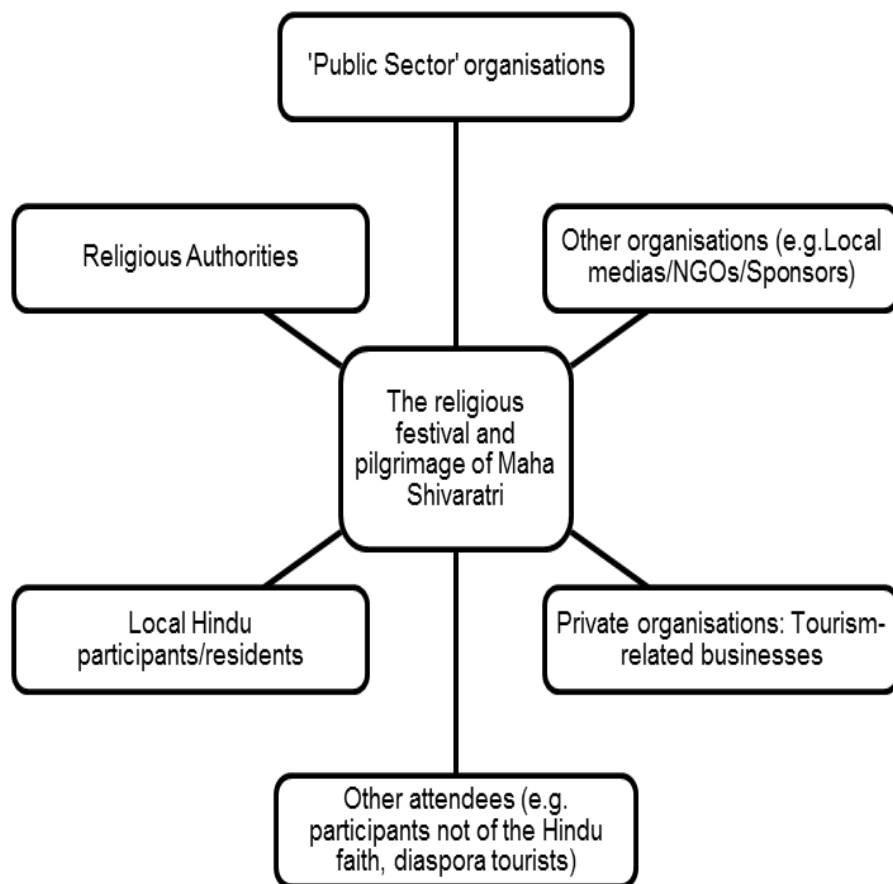


Figure 3.2: Stakeholder map

Figure 3.2 identifies six stakeholder groupings who are involved in and/or have interests in the Festival and its site. Of the six groupings, three sets of stakeholders were selected for inclusion in the study: (a) the 'Public Sector' organisations (PS), (b) the local/Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and (c) the local Hindu residents. The views of these sets of stakeholders form the focus of the data collection for this study.

Each set of stakeholders consists of several organisations or entities. However, not every individual stakeholder within each grouping was involved in the current research. Table 3.1 provides a list of specific representatives within each of the stakeholder groups that were not in the end included in the study.

Table 3.1: List of members from the stakeholder groupings that could potentially be targeted

Stakeholder groupings	Example of potential targeted representatives
'Public Sector' organisations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ministers from different Ministries, for example the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Arts and Culture, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, the Ministry of Local Government amongst others. 2. Municipalities and District councils. 3. Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority
Religious Authorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Other religious/socio-cultural organisations (Hindi speaking and non-Hindi speaking) 2. Temples
Private organisations: Tourism related businesses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hoteliers 2. Tour operators (inbound and outbound) 3. Cruise management companies 4. Entrepreneurs
Other organisations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local media 2. NGOs 3. Sponsors

Predominantly, the decision on the choice of the three sets of stakeholders was guided by the aim and objectives of the research. Other considerations were involved in the decisions on including or not including different stakeholder groups which included the time and cost of the data collection in Mauritius as well as the feasibility of the overall PhD. The stakeholders chosen for the research were able to give a wide range of views and answers that provided a comprehensive picture of their involvement in the Festival and the topics under investigation. This helped to assess the relationship between the different sets of stakeholders by considering whether their views are in consensus or in conflict with each other (see *Chapter 8*). A view of the relationships was deemed to be important for the development and sustainability of the Festival. As a result, using the views of the 'Public Sector' organisations (PS), the local/Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the local Hindu residents has helped achieving the aim and objectives of this research.

In this study, the research does not explore the views of the individual on the research topics. In fact, the representatives were asked to answer on behalf of their organisation and not on their personal views of the topic under investigation. This approach helps to set out the position/views of the organisation. For example, different Ministers within the PS category may have varied opinions on the commoditisation of the Festival and the site. As the research focuses on tourism topics, the Ministry of Tourism would be better placed to answer on behalf of the tourism Ministry within the PS groupings. This means that the representatives who were nominated and interviewed held a high

position in the organisation, and so were well placed to answer on behalf of their organisation. The following paragraphs will briefly discuss why representatives of each set of groupings were not included.

The first set of stakeholders in Table 3.1 is the ‘Public Sector’ organisations. This group of stakeholders mainly comprises secular organisations involved in the current and future policy making/strategy decisions relating to the development of the Mauritian economy and the Festival. In the current research, three members were interviewed to answer on behalf of their organisations/department. Whilst a member of this set of stakeholder is involved in the effective management of the Festival, others are interested in the ‘future’ development of the Festival and its site as a tourist attraction. All three were able to provide rich data on their organisations’ views on commoditisation of the Festival and its site. In addition, prior to and during the Festival, various Ministers and members of the Parliament work/join together under the umbrella of the Maha Shivaratri Task Force. As a key member of the Maha Shivaratri Task Force was interviewed (see Table 3.2), the researcher ruled out the possibility of interviewing each representative of the Government of Mauritius on this committee or Ministers or members of the Parliament/politicians in the PS. Nevertheless, initial contacts were made with some Ministers during the period of the data collection but the researcher could not establish interviews with the majority of them. One of the reasons is that there was the proclamation of the general election in Mauritius which caused delays in the organisations’ ability to set interview dates.

The next set of stakeholders is the Mauritian Religious Authorities. They are religious authorities/organisations which are/were involved in the Festival and have religious and/or cultural intents. For the purpose of this research, it was classified as ‘on-site’ religious authorities and ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisations (see Section 3.6.2). While the study incorporates the views of the representatives of all organisations overseeing temples at Ganga Talao, it does not include all ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisations. As commoditisation is likely to affect those organisations/temples at the sacred site with an increase in the number of tourists, it is considered to be more important to explore the research topics with these organisations. As Ganga Talao is a landmark for the local Hindus, the views of the key representatives of all the temples were included in this research. In order to complement the views of ‘on-site’ religious authorities, influential ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisations were also interviewed to build on the research topics. Whilst some organisations may be in favour of commoditisation, others might oppose and could provide key inputs for future recommendations. Other ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisations that were included in this study are involved in promoting Hinduism and advising on the Festival as well as forming part of the Maha Shivaratri Task Force. Therefore an ‘all-inclusive’ view was obtained to provide an understanding of these organisations’ views on the nature of religious experiences offered by the Festival to the local Hindu participants.

The study did not incorporate private tourism businesses even though some of them are already promoting the Festival and its site through their websites. Firstly, the focus of these organisations remains on the daily management of their business affairs rather than national/strategic policies relating to the Festival. In fact, tourism related businesses would gain economic benefits from further developing the Festival and its site as a tourist attraction. Secondly, the research sought to understand the authenticity of the religious experiences offered by the Festival to the local Hindu participants as there is a need to preserve and maintain these experiences if there is an increase in the number of tourists. Private organisations dealing with the tourism sector were not included in the current research but would clearly be a focus of interest for subsequent enquiry once the views of these non-commercial and religious organisations and the local Hindu participants have been established. The aim and objectives were restricted to the three sets of stakeholders: PS, RAs and the local Hindu residents.

Also included in Table 3.1 is the ‘Other organisations’ category which includes NGOs, local media and sponsors. These organisations have specific sets of objectives and play an important role during the Festival. For example, some NGOs ensure the site remains clean at all times while others look after the well-being of pilgrims in terms of providing the basic necessities such as food, drink and shelter. In regard to local media, these organisations provide live coverage and/or news feed of the Festival to Mauritians (e.g. traffic status, precautionary measures that need to be undertaken, weather forecast and so on). Although organisations within the ‘Other organisations’ category add to the festival experiences for the participants, it is less likely that they would have contributed to the topics under investigation as outlined in Section 3.2. If there is an increase in the number of tourists for the Festival, it is believed that this would not affect these organisations’ objectives and prevent them from delivering their services. In fact, they will keep up with their actions and ensure the well-being of the participants, irrespective of their faith.

Last, data was collected from the local Hindu residents. This set of stakeholders is the local consumers of the religious experiences offered by the Festival. They have strong attachment to the Festival and its site. If commoditisation is to take place, through tourism development, the nature of the religious experiences sought and gained by this stakeholder group may be adversely affected. Overall, for this first detailed investigation of the Festival, it was appropriate to focus on the three sets of stakeholders (RAs, PS and local Hindu residents) who have the primary responsibility for the Festival and its site. Subsequent research post-PhD may include other stakeholders’ views.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

3.4.1 Background

This sub-section consists of two parts. It commences by providing explanations for employing a mixed methods approach for this study. Thereafter, it outlines the paradigmatic stance focusing on pragmatism.

3.4.2 The mixed methods approach

3.4.2.1 Mixed methods research: A brief overview

Over the years, different definitions of mixed methods as a research approach have emerged and these have been orientated by the methods, philosophy, research design and research processes (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). Even though there is no universal definition for this method (Berman 2017), all the definitions commonly have a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods within the same enquiry (Greene et al. 1989; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998; Molina-Azorin and Font 2016). This approach involves collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data as part of a single research project/study (Molina-Azorin et al. 2018).

Accepted as the third major methodological movement after the qualitative and quantitative approaches (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003; Molina-Azorin et al. 2018), the mixed methods approach has gained a distinct identity and a recognised name (Denscombe 2008). It has been identified as a way of thinking by Greene (2007), a key methodologist in the field of mixed methods. Many researchers and academics employ this approach to investigate a phenomena in a more complete manner (Punch 2005; Bryman 2008; Creswell 2009; Migiro and Magangi 2011; Saunders et al. 2012). This research is no exception.

3.4.2.2 Reasons for adopting a mixed methods approach

Over the past decades the use of, and the benefits arising from, qualitative and quantitative methods in social sciences have been widely debated. It may be considered that these traditional methods give rise to distinct sets of information, more specifically through the collection of open-ended data by those adopting the qualitative method and closed ended data by those adopting the quantitative method (Creswell and Creswell 2018). While qualitative methods are employed for interactions in a specific context using inductive, empirical and interpretive approaches, quantitative methods are mostly related to the measurement of frequencies, intensity and values (Keyton 2001). As both of these methods have different strengths and limitations, by mixing or combining these can

strengthen the research outcomes, thus providing a more detailed understanding of the research topics and/or problems.

In this study, a sequential mixed methods strategy was adopted (see Figure 3.1), where the initial qualitative/exploratory research (Stage One), consisting of interviews with Mauritians living in the UK (see Section 3.5), was followed by a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research in Stages Two and Three respectively (see Section 3.6). These two stages were undertaken on the island of Mauritius. Stages Two and Three were conducted concurrently and complemented each other: they were given equal status. The key reasons for adopting a mixed methods approach are set out below.

Firstly, the use of both methods helped to address the aim and objectives of the research, as highlighted in Section 3.2. Employing mixed methods can provide a better insight into the focus of the study (Polit and Beck 2010) by offering a deeper and stronger understanding of the phenomena being studied. Also, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) and Saunders et al. (2012) have argued that researchers should not be confined to only one method of research because the weaknesses related to using only one method can potentially be overcome through the use of a second research method thereby adding value to the research. A mixed method approach can therefore provide more complete answers than a 'single-method' approach (Bryman 2008) thereby providing scope not only for rich data collection but also for rich analyses and interpretation (Punch 2005; Saunders et al. 2007). Thus, adopting mixed methods can generate not only rich explanatory qualitative data but also more generalisable quantitative data that would help providing more deeply rooted responses to the research questions asked. However, Saunders et al. (2012) have acknowledged that the use of mixed methods is not always superior to the use of a mono-method for all research problems. What is important is not how the use of one method is better than the other, but how both can be used together for the advancement of theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

Secondly, research on religious festivals and sacred/pilgrimage sites pertaining to the Hindu religion have been investigated through either qualitative (Kasim 2011; Buzinde et al. 2014; Silva 2015) or quantitative (Gupta and Basak 2018) methods. There has been a limited amount of research that adopts a mixed methods approach focusing on religious festivals and pilgrimages. Based on an analysis of 302 articles between 2003 and 2012 in event and festival management, Kim and Kaewnuch (2018) found that while researchers tended to mostly carry out quantitative (154) or qualitative (138) research, only a few (10) used mixed methods through a combination of interviews and surveys. In another study of 890 articles, retrieved from the hospitality, tourism and event journals, between 2004 to 2016 (inclusive), Draper et al. (2017) found that there was a slight increase in the number of mixed methods articles (31) during the year 2014 and 2015. This suggests that the use of mixed methods in studies of events is on the increase, albeit slightly. For the current research, the mixed methods approach was appropriate as it allowed greater flexibility, especially

because of the limited use of mixed methods focusing on the nature of the religious experiences pertaining to a Hindu religious festival.

Thirdly, mixed methods would enhance the validity of inferences in the research through the triangulation process (Saunders et al. 2007; Molina-Azorin and Font 2016). This can be achieved by cross-checking one set of results associated with one method to the results associated with another method (Bryman 2016) thereby corroborating each method (Brannen 2004). A mixed methods approach was seen to be appropriate as it provides meaningful and insightful data through a combination of both traditional methods. As noted by Bryman (2008) and Creswell (2009), the advantage of mixed methods is that it provides comprehensive answers to the research questions. It also establishes the credibility of the research and produces more complete knowledge in the area being studied (advantages identified in general by Saunders et al. 2012), thereby validating the research (Sedmak and Longhurst 2010). In the present study, the findings resulting from the diversity of views of the three sets of stakeholders were considered to have the potential to add extra breadth of knowledge and generate a comprehensive picture to understand (a) the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival and (b) the perceived effects of commoditisation on the authenticity of the religious experiences.

Watkins and Gioia (2015) state that it can be relatively straightforward to use exploratory sequential mixed methods as it is easily designed, implemented and reported. In an exploratory sequential design, qualitative data is normally collected and analysed first followed by a quantitative approach (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). In the current study, the emerging themes from Stage One (qualitative) were used to inform the interview guide for Stage Two (qualitative) and the development of the questionnaire for Stage Three (quantitative). These Stages will be discussed in Sections 3.5 and 3.6.

3.4.3 Theoretical paradigm: Pragmatism

Choosing a paradigm may pose problems for researchers who undertake mixed methods (Jennings 2010). This may be because different paradigms - positivism, critical realism, social constructionism and interpretivism - have different ontological, epistemological and axiological views. This problem is overcome when a researcher chooses to employ pragmatism as the research paradigm. Pragmatism is an approach which attempts to bridge the gap present in a mixed methods approach in social science (Shannon-Baker 2016). It provides specific information on actions and results rather than encompassing the view of the world (Biesta 2010). To avoid the argument concerning reality and truth, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) have suggested that a pragmatic approach should be adopted where the goal is to gain complete answers for the research questions. This is supported by several researchers who have adopted this approach (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003; Creswell 2003; Johnson et al. 2007; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009; DeForge and Shaw 2012). Morgan (2007) has stated that pragmatism is well-known and well-established as a valuable

approach, adding that this is considered to be more in terms of an ‘approach’ and less in terms of a ‘paradigm’.

The pragmatic approach is not only practical but also places great emphasis on the research questions (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). It allows researchers to be objective in collecting and analysing data, all the while maintaining subjectivity through their personal reflections (Shannon-Baker 2016). The pragmatic approach is strongly associated with mixed methods research (Bazeley 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Cameron 2011). By using a combination of methodologies in the research, researchers are able to formulate better and more precise questions as a means of focusing the research (Biesta 2010). Also, as Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggested, pragmatism is an outcome-oriented method which helps to determine the meaning of things by being better able to answer the research questions. The pragmatic approach is adopted as a means of producing practical solutions to problems in a social context (Shannon-Baker 2016). Patton (2002) has indicated that pragmatism allows a study to be judged on its quality through the intended purpose of the research, the resources which are used, the procedures that have been followed and the results finally obtained. Put simply, it is a process which is action-oriented and it is used to solve problems (Greene and Hall 2010). As such, the pragmatic approach enables researchers to be flexible in their use of methodology.

3.5 STAGE ONE: EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

3.5.1 Stage One: A brief overview

The exploratory research carried out in Stage One is described and discussed in this section. Stage One was conducted through semi-structured face-to-face interviews between 20th November 2013 and 6th December 2013. It was conducted with twelve Hindu Mauritian expatriates, living in the United Kingdom (UK), who had attended the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri at least once in the last 10 years. Stage One, not part of the main research was conducted for three reasons. First, to gain insights into the way Mauritians who had participated in the Festival experienced and evaluated it and how they might think and talk about their experiences. Second, it was not realistic to return to Mauritius to conduct the exploratory research. The exploratory research with Mauritian expatriates meant that people with the relevant knowledge and experience were interviewed. Third, preparing, conducting the interviews and analysing the transcripts provided experience of what would happen in the main qualitative stage (Stage Two).

3.5.2 Snowball sampling technique

A snowball sampling technique was used for Stage One. According to Bryman (2006), snowball sampling focusses on those people who can relate to the research questions and who have had

experiences which are relevant to the research. In order to access these expatriates, the following steps were taken:

- The researcher contacted relatives and friends living in the UK. These people were not interviewed as part of this investigation.
- These acquaintances provided the researcher with the contact details of potential interviewees/participants who had participated in the Festival, over the last ten years.
- The researcher contacted the potential participants and explained the purpose of the call. Upon their agreement to participate in the study, a date and time was set.
- Due to the time and cost constraints, a total of 12 interviews were carried out with Mauritian expatriates living in Manchester, Bedfordshire, Leicester and London.

3.5.3 Themes explored during the interviews

The qualitative interviews covered the following four themes: motivations for taking part in the Festival; the meanings of the rituals, the physical settings, the sacred water; attitudes towards tourism, feelings attached to the Festival and Ganga Talao; and the potential impacts of commoditisation. Interview themes were devised to allow a clear focused discussion on the relevant research topic (Robson 2002; Easterby-Smith et al. 2008). Moreover, the interviewer adopted a flexible approach concerning the way these themes were developed (Saunders et al. 2009) by using a mixture of open ended, probing and specific and closed questions. The use of open-ended questions allowed the interviewees to give their views, attitudes and present facts (Grummitt 1980). Probing questions were used, and as Saunders et al. (2009) stated, this helps to further explore the responses which were important to the research and specific and closed questions helped to confirm an opinion or facts, or to obtain specific information.

3.5.4 Data collection and analysis

The average duration of the interviews was between 50 and 60 minutes. During the interview, the interviewees provided detailed explanations of what they did and felt before, during and after the Festival and while at the site (see Appendix A). The explanations provided generic insights as to the potential range of responses which was of importance in formulating interview guides and the questionnaire for the main data collection stages. According to Saunders et al. (2012), this is a dynamic approach where the use of one methodology, either quantitative or qualitative, may be used to inform the next phase or phases of data collection.

All interviews were mainly carried out in Creole, a language which, in addition to English, is widely spoken by Mauritians. The researcher was flexible with the interviewees as to the use of Creole, English, Bhojpuri and Hindi languages, all of which he is familiar with and can freely

communicate in. This flexibility allowed the interviewer to have a better understanding of the terminology or ideas associated with the participants' feelings and experiences and enhanced the interviewees' ease of communicating and expressing. The researcher, who is also a Hindu Mauritian, felt that he shared a common sense of 'belonging' to the community and ethnicity with the interviewees and that this improved the rapport between the interviewer and interviewees and resulted in meaningful and lengthy conversations. Even though there may be a degree of bias, it is believed that a non-Mauritian Hindu would not have retrieved such deep and rich insights from these expatriates mainly because they would be more at ease, talking to a Mauritian-Hindu, regarding a context which both they and the researcher are familiar with.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed in English and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Translating from foreign language to English is a far from exact science. The researcher tried to maintain the accuracy of the meaning of phrases and words during this process such that the essence was not lost. As translating interviews from one language into another language demand great care, the researcher's wife volunteered to verify the recorded interviews against the transcriptions to ensure that the meanings were not lost during the translation. The researcher's wife, a native Mauritian, is a barrister who has undertaken all her degrees in the UK and has a good grasp of all the above-mentioned languages. A summary of the findings for Stage One is attached in Appendix B.

It should be noted that Stage One was more helpful in designing the quantitative instrument for Stage Three than the interview guides for Stage Two. This is because the expatriates, being themselves participants, related the activities undertaken, their emotions and attitudes towards tourism development for the Festival, as would a local Hindu participant. This helped to identify the religious experiences sought and gained by the Hindu residents during the Festival. As Stages Two and Three are better positioned to answer the research aim and objectives of the study, a more expanded consideration will be given to them in Section 3.6.

3.5.5 The key findings of Stage One and its relevance for Stages Two and Three

While Appendix B reports the findings of Stage One, that is the analyses of the twelve Hindu Mauritian expatriates' interviews, this section highlights the main findings that have emerged and shows their relevance in informing the data collection for both Stages Two and Three (see Figure 3.1).

3.5.5.1 Reasons for participating in the Festival

The informants provided insights into the reasons why they participated in the Festival. Three types of reason emerged from the analyses of the interviews, namely (a) the religious reasons, (b) the

social reasons and (c) the Festival related reasons. The responses of six interviewees are illustrated in Box 3.1. In order to maintain the identities of the interviewees, code names (in the format of INTXX) were given to them. For instance, INT06 refers to the sixth interviewee. For each quotation, text in square brackets indicates one of the following: (a) the use of extra probing questions, (b) the provision of extra explanations for a particular term, or (c) interpretation of what the interviewee inferred. Also, within the quotations specific text is highlighted through background shading; this denotes key words/sentences which are relevant to the themes and/or topics under investigation.

Box 3.1: Quotations on the personal reasons for participating in the Festival

<i>The religious reasons</i>	
INT06	"When I was young, I used to undertake the pilgrimage every year and my parents were religious. So when I went to Mauritius, I decided to go...it is a centre of nostalgia and at the same time part of my belief. When I am there [in Mauritius], I automatically get involved into it...I like to participate in it [the Festival]."
INT08	"Since my childhood, every year, my parents and I have always participated. This was an opportunity for me to go and pray there [at Ganga Talao]."
INT09	"I have always participated in this Festival when I was in Mauritius. I have a great belief on Lord Shiva and I have always prayed to Him. Even here [in UK] I do his prayers."
INT12	"I am brought up as a Hindu and it is something inborn. It is part of my culture. If I am there [in Mauritius], it is my duty to attend it."
<i>The social reason</i>	
INT07	"My friends were going. After so many years I got the opportunity to meet and walk with them...We went in a group of 7 to 8 people."
<i>The Festival related reason</i>	
INT02	"It's something very memorable...I like this atmosphere, walking to and from...you get another feeling and...for Mauritian Hindus, it's a renowned festival. I like on the road the way people celebrate it, they provide food, snacks. It's very important, interesting..."

The Hindu Mauritian expatriates provided their personal reasons for participating in the Festival. Three types of reasons were identified. Firstly, in terms of religious reasons, the participants had the opportunity to pray to Lord Shiva (INT08 and INT09), to fulfil their religious duties (INT12), to reaffirm their belief (INT06 and INT09) and to perpetuate their culture (INT06 and INT12). These participants have participated in the Festival since their childhood. These ancestral customs and traditions were passed on to them by their parents and they always took part in the Festival. As the Festival coincides with their visit to Mauritius, it was their duty to take part in it. As a result, they showed their loyalty and commitment towards their religion and might have potentially reinforced their disposition, religious identity and belief. Secondly, one interviewee participated in the Festival for social related reasons. The interviewee was able to undertake the pilgrimage in a group of 7 to 8 people. Thus, this participant was able to meet and interact with other members of the group during the walk. This indicates that during the pilgrimage to and from the sacred site, participants tend to travel in a group and are expected to interact with others and that may potentially help them to build up existing or new bonds with other participants. Lastly, in regard to the Festival related reasons, one interviewee considered the atmosphere to be unique while walking during the Festival. The

interviewee goes on by explaining that the food that is offered along the pilgrimage route adds to the atmosphere and makes the Festival experiences memorable.

The findings indicate that these Hindu Mauritian expatriates take part in the Festival for different reasons. In order to have a more in-depth understanding of the main reasons for their participation in the Festival, Stage Two, the qualitative approach, explored the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) on the religious significance of the Festival for both the local Hindu community (see Appendix C and Section 4.2). This question would potentially help assessing the views of the RAs on the meanings attached to the Festival by the local Hindu community and providing an indication of the importance the Festival plays in their (religious, public and private) lives. Moreover, the question based on the reasons for participating in the Festival also figured in the questionnaire as part of Stage Three (see Appendix H and Section 5.2.2.3). This question provides a better understanding of how the Festival is perceived by the local Hindu residents and helps in assessing what sort of religious experiences they seek to gain for the Festival, either religious or non-religious in nature.

3.5.5.2 Activities carried out by the Hindu Mauritian expatriates as part of the preparation

Interviewing the Hindu Mauritian expatriates has helped understanding the activities they carried out for the Festival. For instance, specific behaviours/religious actions were carried out by the participants during their preparation for the Festival. The views of five participants are given in Box 3.2.

Box 3.2: Quotations on the religious actions undertaken by the participants during their preparation

INT01	"On the day, before going to Grand Bassin, I wake up early, bath, do my prayers, drink tea, do not eat bread, can eat something sweet and we wear white attire (white skirt, blouse, a shawl). I can't wear sari to walk...I carry a bottle on my shoulder..."
INT02	"...we fast for a week. We eat vegetarian food. On the day, I start walking to Grand Bassin [Ganga Talao], do not eat salty foods, especially salt from the sea. Food is prepared with salt from mountains/'Sendha Nimak' [referring to rock salt]... If possible, it is better to eat something sweet; there is nothing wrong with the sweet foods...I fast for 3 days during the walk then on the 4th day I break my fast."
INT03	"...you need to fast. You should have a clean heart. You bath, prepare your clothes, specially white ones. You pray before leaving the house, help those making Kanwar because they start making it well in advance. [How do you feel when you help those making the Kanwar?] It's like you forget your entire problem. You put yourself in that situation and feel very happy."
INT08	"...buying the ingredients, carrying out prayers, fasting, cleaning the house, consuming vegetarian food, remain clean and tidy."
INT11	"You fast for a number for weeks (2 to 3). On the eve, you buy all the things which you will bring. On the day, you pluck betel and flowers before going to Grand-bassin. You have sweets and do have salty things..."

As part of their preparation for the Festival, the interviewees carried out a range of activities before and on the day of travelling to the sacred site. For example, participants cleaned their house (INT08), undertook fasting (INT02, INT03, INT08 and INT11), wore white clothes (INT01 and INT03), bought religious items (INT08 and INT11), prepared Kanwar (INT03), carried out prayers (INT01 and INT08) etc. All the participants undertook fasting. Fasting is a form of sacrifice undertaken by the participants during the Festival. The type of fasting varied for each individual in that some preferred to either consume sweets on the day they travelled to Ganga Talao or only vegetarian foods. The duration of the fast varied. One participant stated the use of rock salt for preparing food. Participants cleaned the house and wore white attire before leaving to the sacred site. Overall, all these religious actions help them to purify their mind and undertake a form of sacrifice. These activities are considered to have both a physical and mental influence on the participants.

The activities undertaken by the participants for the Festival provided a guide as to what local Hindu residents do as part of their preparation. As a result, all these responses were useful in designing the questionnaire as part of Stage Three. More specifically, the questionnaire included a range of potential activities that the local Hindu participants carried out as part of the *actual Festival product* (the four components of the Festival: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja) and the level of importance attached to the activities undertaken in contributing to their religious experiences. This has helped in better understanding the behaviours of the local Hindus during the Festival and the importance of those behaviours in contributing to their religious experiences.

3.5.5.3 Views of Hindu Mauritian expatriates on tourism and commoditisation

Another key theme explored with the twelve Hindu Mauritian expatriates was that of tourism and commoditisation. This sub-section covers the attitudes of the interviewees towards promoting the Festival for tourists. The responses of five interviewees are provided in Box 3.3.

Box 3.3: Quotations of the Hindu Mauritian expatriates on promoting the Festival for tourists

<i>Attitudes towards tourism for the Festival</i>	
INT02	<p>“Tourists are very interested and they make it a must to visit Grand Bassin. Even when they go there, the priests show appreciation by...putting tikka [tilaka on the forehead]. If they are covered enough, they can enter the temple...they should dress properly. We, Hindus, we respect everyone...When they enter [tourists entering the temple], the priests do their prayers even if they have not brought any offerings. They put tikka and ring the bells.”</p>

Box 3.3 (continued): Quotations of the Hindu Mauritian expatriates on promoting the Festival for tourists

<i>Attitudes towards tourism for the Festival</i>	
INT04	"It's very exciting that they participate. When I was doing my prayers, some tourists approached me to ask what we were doing. We explained them and they also entered the temple and put their tikka and prayed. I see it's very good and impressive because there are people who do not believe in this. They [the tourists] respect our religion, remove their shoes to enter [the temple] and pray. You don't often see this, it is something rare."
INT07	"Tourists should be aware of the importance and the procedures. Some may say that they [the Hindus] are praying stones...They [Tourists] need to remove their shoes, sandals and follow the customs. Every place has their rules and they [tourists] need to follow. We are Hindus and they are allowed [to participate]."
INT08	It is a privileged because they [tourists] are integrating our society and culture to learn more about our religion."
INT12	"I do not like to see tourists as they were not suitably dressed...the man was wearing his shorts. They [tourists] should be more decent and in the women case, they were putting tikka on their forehead without any religious motives. I cannot say that I witnessed someone following the rituals like we do. They had to pay for that tikka and it defeats the whole purpose of doing the Festival...It should not be encouraged. If they want a tikka, there should be someone explaining its purpose...you need to have someone who can tell a history, its purpose, the meaning of the place and let them go through small 15-20 minutes ceremony and then put the tikka...This may be developed for the future. The Tourist Board should make them [tourists] aware to have the correct dress codes."

The Hindu Mauritian expatriates had mixed views about tourists attending the Festival. For instance, from Box 3.3, three out of five interviewees (INT02, INT04 and INT08) were in favour of having tourists at the Festival whilst the remaining two (INT07 and INT12) provided their views as to why they imposed such a move of having tourists at the Festival.

Tourists like to visit Ganga Talao (INT02) and to participate in prayers in the temple at the sacred site (INT02 and INT04). In fact, this shows that tourists are interested in Hinduism (INT08). In doing so, Hindus must be proud about it. In essence, this may help towards fostering social and community cohesion (between Hindus and tourists not of the Hindu faith). Even though INT04 was approached by tourists during the rituals, this may create a feeling of dismay by other Hindu participants who are focusing on undertaking their prayers and rituals for the Festival. For instance, INT07 and INT12 were not in favour of developing the Festival and site as a tourist attraction. These interviewees along with INT02 and INT04 (who were in favour of tourism) expressed concerns about the tourists' behaviours at the site, for example tourists not being properly dressed. INT07 proposed that tourists should follow customs at the site and be aware of the rules and regulations. INT12 considered that tourists who are not religiously motivated and not participating should learn more about the significance and purpose of the Festival or related activities. If religious activities are commercialised for tourists and they are not properly dressed, the purpose of the Festival is defeated. Overall, interaction between tourists and local Hindu participants is expected to increase social benefits and the commercialisation of religious practices would affect the way the Festival was celebrated. Based on the views of the Mauritian expatriates, these

proposals informed the development of the questionnaire for Stage Three (see Q32 and Q33 in Appendix H). Additionally, the views of the RAs and PS, in Stage Two, on the possible impacts of promoting and developing the Festival and site for more tourists, not of the Hindu faith, and the possible outcomes/broader impacts that may result from the development of the Festival were also explored.

Furthering the topic on tourism and commoditisation, the exploratory research with the Hindu Mauritian expatriates also explored their attitudes towards the possible impact on their religious experiences if in the next 10 years the number of tourists is doubled. The responses of six informants were outlined in Box 3.4.

Box 3.4: Quotations of the Hindu Mauritian expatriates on tourism and commoditisation

<i>Impact of doubling the number of tourists (that is have some 400 000 in the next 10 years) attending the Festival on the religious experiences</i>	
INT04	<i>"No it won't affect people. Instead people need to be happy that tourists are coming and that will be more renowned with time. Even now people from all over the world are taking part, for example India and Africa [inferring to South African]. It will be very good...It will be a good thing for Mauritius, but they should be looked after too...good guides to explain about the Festival, if not tourists won't come."</i>
INT05	<i>"Definitively, they do not have to bring tourists during the Festival. Tourists can go at other times...It is only during the period of the Festival that local Hindus go in mass [inferring to unite and get together]. Now...if you bring buses of tourists, then it will not be religion [inferring to religious anymore] but mayhem. You will have all sorts of people, thus the spiritual significance will be lost. It will be just like a market place in Mauritius where anybody can go...They should restrict the number of tourists during the Festival."</i>
INT08	<i>"I don't think so. We should be happy to see people getting gathered spiritually. It will be beneficial to us [Hindus]; it will make us proud. It will help in terms of: communication, educational and promotion of the religion through books/debates where they tell their experiences."</i>
INT09	<i>"It will change; it will be overcrowded. Hindus will feel embarrassed because they would pray and others will be there as spectators..."</i>
INT11	<i>"If there are more it may be yes and no. It is not bad if the government wants to promote it as long as they have the right infrastructure, such as [proper] transport system, improve the infrastructure [at the site]. It [Ganga Talao] is not a big place, if there are more people [tourists] it will be good for the economy. Now itself there are more, people [local Hindus] say it is ok but if there are more tourists, then possibly local people will say tourists are participating in this Festival and they don't know exactly what they are doing, they are taking their space. People [local Hindus] will change their attitudes [towards tourism], people won't say that tourists are coming because of their faith but they are taking the place of others [local Hindus]."</i>
INT12	<i>"That will cheapen the whole idea of the pilgrimage. I do not think the Festival should be mixed with tourism at any cost. They should be kept separately. If they advertise it and if tourists want to take part and not to gape at the pilgrims and make it in such a way that it is promoted for an (religious) experience, this will be acceptable as they will be a participant rather than an observer...If not...it will defeat the whole purpose of the Festival...I cannot think of a better word to say that but the whole idea of the Festival will disappear...If tourists want to participate they are most welcome and need to follow certain etiquettes."</i>

When asked if it would make a difference if the number of tourists were doubled over the next 10 years, this led to mixed responses. For instance, INT04 believed that such move would not change

the religious experiences for the participants as there are already a lot of people of Hindu faith attending the Festival from India and parts of Africa. In fact, the Festival will become famous. It is thought that more participants will be a sense of pride for the local Hindus. Furthermore, tourists are thought to enhance social experiences arising through communication/interaction and sharing of cultural knowledge (INT08). At a broader level, tourism is expected to help the Mauritian economy (INT11). Thus, tourists are believed to enhance social experiences, social exchanges and economic benefits. However, concerns arose about the size of the sacred site being too small to accommodate so many people (INT11), thus making it too crowded like a market (INT05). INT05 proposed to restrict the number of tourists during the Festival as it will affect the sacredness of the site. It is the only time where local Hindus gather and experience a sense of togetherness. With more tourists at the site, local Hindus may feel a sentiment of uneasiness when conducting their prayers/rituals as tourists would be there as 'spectators' (INT09) and may feel that others are taking away their religious spaces (INT11). As a result, this will influence the way participants do their prayers and reduce the significance of the Festival, thus negatively affecting their religious experiences. As long as tourists come for religious purposes this would not affect the local Hindus' religious experiences (INT12). This indicates that those coming as 'voyeurs' would not be welcomed. Additionally, the findings of Stage One showed that an increase in the number of tourists would cheapen the Festival (INT12). However, it is believed that these issues can be reduced if the Government of Mauritius offers better transport system and infrastructural development at the sacred site (INT11) and tourists follow etiquettes (INT12).

The topic on tourism and commoditisation was covered in both Stages Two and Three. In Stage Two, the representatives of the PS and RAs were asked to provide their views as to (a) what changes they considered would be acceptable given that an increase in the number of tourists may bring about benefits as well as undesirable consequences, and (b) whether or not conflicts would arise between local Hindu participants and tourists. Based on some of the responses of the Hindu Mauritian expatriates, statements were formulated as part of Stage Three (the questionnaire) to understand the attitudes of local Hindu residents towards the commoditisation of the Festival and its site. Several key points that emerged as part of Stage One were adapted and included in questions 32, 33 and 34 of the questionnaire (see Appendix H).

Overall, the exploratory study with the Hindu Mauritian expatriates has helped to develop a better understanding of, and insights into, the way the Festival is celebrated. It was therefore used to design the interview guides for Stage Two and the quantitative instrument for Stage Three.

3.6 MAIN DATA COLLECTION IN MAURITIUS

3.6.1 Introduction

This sub-section highlights the key processes involved during the main data collection for both Stages Two and Three that took place in Mauritius. It has two key parts. Firstly, it starts by describing the research approach involved in Stage Two, more specifically looking at the reasons for adopting the qualitative approach and semi-structured interviews, the development of the interview guides, the method of sampling, the qualitative data analysis, the difficulties encountered during the data collection and the evaluation of this approach. Secondly, the research design involved in the Stage Three data collection is outlined: it encompasses the sampling approach, the questionnaire design and the method used to administer the questionnaires. It also highlights the difficulty encountered during the data approach and the evaluation of the quantitative approach.

3.6.2 Stage Two: A qualitative approach

3.6.2.1 Background

Stage Two was conducted from 17th July 2014 to 21st April 2015 in Mauritius. It involved semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews with two sets of stakeholders, eight representatives of the Mauritius Religious Authorities (RA) having religious and/or cultural intents in the Festival and three representatives of the ‘Public Sector’ organisations (PS), comprising government agencies involved in the implementation of current and future policies relating to the Festival. The RAs were composed of two groups. First, three ‘on-site’ religious authorities (ORA) who are involved in overseeing one or more temples at Ganga Talao and second, five ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisations (ORO), which are based outside Ganga Talao, but look after the ‘well-being’ of the festival participants during the Festival.

3.6.2.2 Adopting qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews

A qualitative approach was adopted with the two sets of stakeholders. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were undertaken with representatives from each of the eight local religious authorities and the three government organisations. The conceptualisation of topics that were explored with the two sets of stakeholders was guided by a critical literature analysis, as highlighted in Section 2.6.

The representatives of the RAs provided the views of their organisation on (a) the significance of the Festival for the local Hindu community, (b) the nature of the religious experiences (overall core and augmented) and their authenticity, and (c) the identification and evaluation of the changes that commoditisation might bring about and whether those changes were considered acceptable. In

contrast, the representatives of the PS were interviewed to establish (a) their organisations' involvement, if any, in the Festival and how their organisation viewed the future development of the Festival and its site, (b) which features of the Festival and site are considered to be authentic and have the potential to attract tourists and (c) the possible impact of commoditising the Festival and its site through policies designed to increase the number of tourists by promoting the Festival to tourists. The decision to use a qualitative approach with these stakeholders was to explore and identify key components of the nature of the religious experiences and the commoditisation process and to contextualise and sensitise concepts so that the policies and attitudes of the organisations vis-à-vis the Festival could be more thoroughly explored and understood.

Data can be collected in qualitative research using unstructured, semi-structured or structured interviews, focus groups and narrative interviews (Gratton and Jones 2010). After consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of each type of data collection, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were chosen for the research given that what was required was to develop an understanding of the organisations' point of view of what the Festival offers and what the organisation is/would be trying to achieve through the Festival. Semi-structured interviews not only allowed the key informants, answering on behalf of their organisation, to set out the position/views of the organisation but also for the interviewer to develop a more in-depth understanding of those views and positions. Hence, a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews was a flexible method of interviewing that provided the opportunity to further explore relevant responses and interesting points from the two sets of the stakeholders that were considered as important to the current research.

3.6.2.3 The interview guides

The development of the interview guides was informed by the conceptualisation resulting from the literature analysis, as highlighted in Section 2.6. As the two sets of stakeholders have different roles, different interview guides (see Appendix C) were developed to meet objectives 2 and 4 (see Section 3.2).

Interview themes/questions were devised to allow a clear focused discussion on the relevant research topics. The RAs, giving the views on behalf of their organisations, helped in understanding what their organisations want to achieve through the Festival. Objective 2 was to establish the views of the RAs on the religious experiences of the Mauritian Hindu participants resulting from participation in the Festival. Levitt's (1981) typology and Kotler's (1994) conceptualisation of product levels were used as the framework that guided the critical exploration of the perceived religious experiences (overall *core religious experiences* and the *augmented nature of the religious experiences*) sought by local Hindus participants for the Festival. As the RAs are responsible for the perpetuation of the Hindu religion and cultural values amongst the local Hindu community, they

were able to provide in-depth information on these religious experiences. This objective also focused on understanding the authenticity of the festival experiences.

Objective 4, uses the views of the RAs and the PS, to explore the potential future development of the Festival and its site as a tourist attraction and the potential effect that would have on the Festival. This was explored through questions about the potential impacts of a significant increase in the number of tourists not of the Hindu faith being present along the pilgrimage routes and at Ganga Talao, on whether there would be potential tensions between local Hindu participants and these tourists and on the anticipated causes of such tensions and how these should be resolved. Both sets of stakeholders were able to underpin our understanding and knowledge on the way the authenticity of the festival experiences was perceived and what changes were considered acceptable if the Festival and its site are promoted and developed for more tourists not of the Hindu faith.

3.6.2.4 Purposive sampling and data collection

Purposive sampling was chosen for Stage Two: the election of specific organisations to achieve the research aim and objectives. As noted above two sets of stakeholders were targeted: those who have a religious and/or cultural intent (the RAs) and those key governmental agencies that may make key policy decisions if commoditisation were to occur in the future (the PS). For instance, the RAs are/were involved in delivering, managing and advising on the Festival and its site and therefore, they were better placed to provide the views of their organisation on the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival to the local Hindu participants. In contrast, the PS was able to provide the views of their organisation on the potential development of the Festival and its site as a tourist attraction.

3.6.2.4.1 The key roles and objectives of the RAs

The roles and objectives of the organisations in each of the two sets of stakeholders are set out in Table 3.2. The RAs were divided into two groups, namely the ‘on-site’ religious authorities (ORA) and the ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisations (ORO).

Table 3.2: The key roles and objectives of the RAs

<i>‘On-site’ religious authorities (ORA)</i>	
<i>Hindu House</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To conduct debates and conferences on Hinduism. - To organise prayers, promote the Hindu religion and its teachings. - To build a temple and a “Spiritual Park” at Ganga Talao. <p style="text-align: right;">(Hindu House 2019a)</p>

Table 3.2 (continued): The key roles and objectives of the RAs

'On-site' religious authorities (ORA)	
<i>Hindu Maha Sabha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To foster religious, cultural and social advancement of the local Hindu community. - To construct, manage and maintain temples and social halls. - To conduct lectures and debates on the Hindu religion, philosophy, etc. (Hindu Maha Sabha 2018)
<i>Mauritiuseswarnath Shiv Jyotir Lingum Temple</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To manage the temple and to perform rituals for the adherents. - To promote spirituality and humanism. (Dayal no date)
'Off-site' religious-cultural organisations (ORO)	
<i>Council of Religions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To promote peace in Mauritius. - To foster acceptance and tolerance between different religious group. (Council of Religions 2018)
<i>Voice of Hindu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To ensure that the Hindu community stays united. - To manage several shrines (Kalimaye) in Mauritius. (Voice of Hindu 2018)
<i>Human Service Trust</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To get youngsters involved in voluntary social activities. - To help those in need and to foster human and cultural values. (Human Service Trust 2018)
<i>Ram Sena</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To look after the welfare of pilgrims along the way, in Vacoas and Quatre-Bornes, during the Festival. - To be involved in activities such as helping those in need and running campaign for blood collection. (Ram Sena 2018)
<i>Mauritius Sanata Dharma Temples Federation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To manage most of the temples in Mauritius. - To distribute grants to the temples that falls under the organisation. (Eisenlohr 2006)

Table 3.2 shows the organisations that were chosen for the main data collection in Mauritius (see Section 3.6.2.6 to understand how the anonymity of those answering on behalf of their organisations was preserved). Overall, all the RAs, except for the Council of Religions, are involved in promoting Hinduism and cultural values in Mauritius. The Council of Religions is mainly involved in the promotion of peace and harmony among different communities in Mauritius. In order to promote and propagate the Hindu religion, the Hindu House organises prayers, debates and conferences whilst the Hindu Maha Sabha gives lectures for the advancement of those of the Hindu faith. Being concerned with the younger generation, the Human Service Trust takes on the responsibility to train youngsters and encourage them to do better in their lives.

More specific to the Festival, the Mauritiuseswarnath Shiv Jyotir Lingum Temple, which is based at Ganga Talao, claims that their organisation promotes spirituality. They do so by providing facilities and services to the disciples to make it easy for them so that they can concentrate on their prayers while at the site. The Mauritius Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation promotes Hinduism and allocates grants to each temple associated with their organisation.

3.6.2.4.2 The key roles and objectives of the PS

All the organisations from the PS are Governmental bodies with different roles. They were able to provide explanation in terms of the authenticity of the Festival and its future development for more tourists. The roles and objectives of this set of stakeholders are given in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: The key role and objectives of the PS

<i>Ministry of Tourism – The policymaker</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To promote Mauritius and its tourism portfolio.- To regulate the tourism sector through legislature. (Ministry of Tourism 2018)
<i>Maha Shivaratri Task Force</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To look after the wellbeing of the pilgrims for the Festival.- To ensure security of pilgrims to and from the Ganga Talao. (Dulthumun 2016; Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh 2018)
<i>Ministry of Tourism – Technical section</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To formulate tourism development plans, policies and marketing strategies. (Ministry of Tourism 2018)

Within the PS category all the three stakeholders are governmental bodies with different objectives and carrying out different functions. Two departments were chosen from the Ministry of Tourism: one is involved in policymaking and the other is actively involved in development and planning of the tourism sector in Mauritius. The Maha Shivaratri Task Force is a key Mauritian Government agency actively engaging and managing the Festival by unifying and working together with different stakeholders such as religious/cultural groups, ministries and their departments and other NGOs. In fact, the Maha Shivaratri Task Force works in partnership with the majority of the ORAs and OROs to ensure the smooth running of the Festival and view themselves as a ‘facilitator’ between the Government authorities and the non-Governmental bodies, including religious, voluntary and parastatal organisations.

3.6.2.4.3 Approaching the stakeholders

Within each of the two sets of stakeholders, the representatives who were nominated and interviewed held a high position in the organisation, and so were well placed to answer on behalf of their organisation. They were not asked to give their personal views and care was taken to make sure this was the case.

There were two ways in which the researcher contacted the interviewees. First, they were contacted by telephone directly through their secretaries. Second, a family member, having personal contacts with some interviewees, put the researcher in contact with them. Thereafter, when the representative of the organisation was contacted, an appointment was made at a suitable date and time.

3.6.2.4.4 Carrying out the interviews

Before the interview was conducted, the researcher handed the interviewees the consent form (see Appendix D) and proceeded with the interview after they had read and signed it (see Section 3.6.2.6). All interviews were recorded, and notes were taken. The interviews were conducted in English and Creole and were based on an interview guide containing a list of questions and topics to be covered during the interview. However, the interviewees were also given freedom in the way they replied, thereby allowing flexibility of the interview process (Bryman 2016). The researcher started with questions that were broad in nature, and then narrowed down to the specific questions of the research as each part of the interview progressed. This allowed the researcher to pick up on the interviewee's replies and to further explore or pursue topics of interest by asking probing questions (Jennings 2010; Bryman 2016). The interviewees were asked to express the views of their organisation, as opposed to their own views (see extract of an interview in Appendix E).

3.6.2.4.5 Difficulties encountered in the qualitative approach

After choosing the eleven key informants for the qualitative interviews, the researcher contacted them for an appointment at a mutually acceptable location and time. The researcher underestimated the amount of time taken to gain access to conduct the interview with the representatives of the organisations. Gaining access to the organisation and conducting interviews in Mauritius occurred over a period of 10 months. In fact, all save one of the interviews were conducted between July 2014 and December 2014 inclusive: the one exception being the interview with the Maha Shivaratri Task Force within the PS category which was carried out in April 2015. Some constraints included gaining appointments with the concerned organisations and the proclamation of elections which caused delays in the organisations' ability to set interview dates.

3.6.2.5 Thematic analysis

The primary data was analysed using thematic analysis (see Appendix F), which is an approach often adopted in qualitative data analysis. Although this approach is common, there are very few specifications of what constitutes a "theme" (Braun and Clarke 2006). Bryman (2016) provides a guideline as to what a "theme" may constitute of:

- it is a category which the researcher identifies through his/her data;
- it relates to the researcher's focus or research questions;
- it is built on codes that have been identified within the transcripts or field notes, and;
- it provides a researcher with a foundation for theoretically understanding the relationships present in the data, thereby allowing him/her to make a theoretical contribution to the literature.

For this research the six-step analysis, developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), was adopted. The following sets out the steps taken to analyse the interview data.

Step 1 - The researcher started by familiarising himself with the data. This was achieved when the researcher translated and transcribed the eleven interviews by listening three to five times to the recordings. Additionally, the researcher read the transcripts numerous times to achieve an adequate transcription and translation.

Step 2 - In this step, primary codes were generated from the interviews by working through the whole transcripts so that the context of an extract remained in focus while also being aware that some statements could be simultaneously relevant for other themes. Coding also entailed the reduction of data so that the working data is manageable.

Step 3 - This step involved the search for themes. It was achieved by sorting the codes into numerous themes and subsequently assembling extracts into the relevant themes (the same procedure was carried out for all the questions in the transcripts of all the eleven interviews). For example, when the interviewees were asked the views of their organisation on the religious significance of the Festival for the (a) pilgrims and (b) local Hindu community (see Section 4.2), four themes emerged, namely (1) 'celebrating the splendour of the Supreme divinity', (2) 'religious significance of the Festival', (3) 'performing core religious actions' and (4) 'fostering religious and social identity'. The codes from the interview transcriptions were then assembled to these four themes for this question.

Step 4 - This step included reviewing the themes. It was carried out by the researcher focusing on data extracts, broken down into themes and subthemes (referred as constituents in the current research). For example, the theme 'authentic' social experiences (see Section 6.2.4) consists of three constituents: the 'dynamic and active participation', 'Hindu identity' and 'facilitating participants' participation'. For instance, 'facilitating participants' participation' (ORA3) relates to the benevolent services provided by volunteers that help the Festival run smoothly resulting in unique and authentic social experiences for participants along the way to and from Ganga Talao and at the site during the Festival.

Step 5 - This step included the defining and naming of themes. During this process, the researcher moved among the codes, transcripts, themes and subthemes/constituents to establish a thematic map ensuring that the codes were in the appropriate section. In cases where it was thought that a code overlapped with another sub-theme or theme, the researcher consulted the original text to

establish the meaning that the interviewee intended and then grouped the code into the appropriate subthemes/constituents.

Step 6 - This step included producing the report. During this final step, the results were presented in one document.

3.6.2.6 Ethical considerations for the qualitative approach

The researcher had sought ethical approval from Bournemouth University to carry out the data collection (see Appendix G) prior to conducting the primary research. The researcher attended an ethics committee held at the University along with his first supervisor. As the research had minimal risk, the committee approved the research design for the main research.

As noted earlier, once the researcher managed to secure appointments with the interviewees, the research was carried out based on informed consent using an information sheet (see Appendix D). The information sheet gave the interviewees the opportunity to be fully informed about the nature of the research and the reasons for their participation before they participated in the research. More specifically, that information sheet told the representative of the organisation the purpose of the research, how the data collected would be used (i.e. for the PhD thesis and for other academic related work which may include academic conferences and publishing articles), that they were participating on a voluntary basis and so they were allowed to withdraw at any time, without giving reasons and without there being any negative consequences. The information sheet also mentioned that the interviewees could decline from answering any particular question(s) if they wanted to, and how the information they provided would be dealt with in terms of storage and the anonymity of the participants. All interviews were recorded as the interviewees agreed to it and notes were also taken during the conversation.

During the undertaking of the qualitative research, the researcher ensured that no harm befell the research subjects. This included the maintaining of confidentiality. This essentially meant that the identities of representative of the organisation and any records of interviewees should be kept confidential. As such, to maintain the 'secret' identities of informants from the organisations, they have been given code names for the rest of the research as: (1) ORA1, ORA2 and ORA3 for the 'on-site' religious authorities, (2) ORO1, ORO2, ORO3, ORO4 and ORO5 for 'off-site' religious-cultural organisations and (3) PS1, PS2 and PS3 for 'Public Sector' organisations. The names of the organisations are provided in Tables 3.2 and 3.3. But the code names do not sequentially match the name of the organisation in the tables. For instance, ORA1 is not the organisation given in the first position within the 'on-site' religious authorities in Table 3.2. The 'on-site' religious authorities and 'off-site' religious-cultural organisations were put in the same Table 3.2 to represent the grouping of the Mauritian Religious Authorities. All transcriptions of the recordings are safely stored in a

secured laptop (i.e. encrypted folder). A back up copy of the transcriptions will be kept safely for a period of 2 years in an external drive which will be deleted after the conclusion of the PhD thesis.

Furthermore, the researcher ensured that all interviews were conducted in a safe environment. All the interviews were undertaken in the office of the representative, with the exception of ORO2 and ORO3 which took place at a mutually acceptable location. The interviews occurred during the daytime or in the afternoon. The researcher informed his wife of the location and time the interviews were conducted and an approximate length of the interview. On conclusion, the researcher's wife was informed.

3.6.2.7 Evaluating the qualitative research

Based on the fundamental belief of pragmatism, theories may be contextual and can be analysed for generalisability making these transferable to other research (Shannon-Baker 2016). Evaluating the research will ensure both the quality standards and transparency of the research design. The quality of qualitative research will be assessed through trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Trustworthiness can be assessed through credibility, dependability and transferability (Morrow 2005); these criteria can help to determine if the results can be trusted. Trustworthiness of the data can be increased if, as discussed by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), the data is interpreted accurately.

Credibility, also referred to as internal validity, is about making sure that the research measures were what it was meant to do (Morrow 2005). By undertaking prolonged interviews with these two sets of stakeholders, for more than 90 minutes, the researcher obtained thick descriptions in terms of the context under study; this allowed internal validity to be achieved. To achieve credibility, the researcher undertook necessary steps to make sure that there was a rigorous process throughout the research. Therefore, the collection and analysis of the data were documented and have been discussed thoroughly. Also, in relation to the mixed methods design, credibility was achieved by triangulating the results which helped to develop a theoretical contribution of the current study to the literature.

Dependability is also referred to as reliability (Shenton 2004) as a parallel for quantitative research (Bryman 2008). Dependability can be enhanced through "inquiry audit" (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p.317). It relates to the manner the research is carried out. To ascertain reliability of the research, the researcher detailed all the procedures which were carried out for all Stages (One, Two and Three), ensuring that research practices were followed.

Transferability refers to the usage of thick description, which is rich information concerning a culture, providing a database for other researchers to judge whether findings can be transferred to other contexts (Lincoln and Guba 1996). The researcher explored the nature of religious experiences which may help other researchers to transfer the findings to other socially religious contexts where participants are involved in religious practices. The findings of this research can therefore be transferred to similar context of religious festivals and sites which involve pilgrimages and where there is an attempt for commoditising them.

Authenticity ensures that the qualitative data is presented in a fair manner (Bryman 2008). In the current study, the interviews were recorded and transcribed in such a way as to avoid data being inaccurate or missed. The interviews were transcribed from Creole to English. The researcher maintained the accuracy of the meaning of phrases and words during this process such that the essence was not lost. This is the best practice when it comes to qualitative research; it helps to enhance its authenticity (Guba and Lincoln 2005).

3.6.3 Stage Three: A quantitative approach

3.6.3.1 Background

Both Stages Two and Three were conducted simultaneously as part of the main research in Mauritius. Whilst Stage Two employed a qualitative approach, Stage Three adopted a quantitative approach targeting the Mauritian Hindu residents who had participated in the Festival as the third set of stakeholders identified for the study. Stage Three was conducted from 29th December 2014 to 14th February 2015. A self-completed questionnaire (see Appendix G), using the drop and collect method (DCM), was employed to collect this main data. The design of the questionnaire was informed by the analysis of the data collected in the Stage One data collection exercise undertaken in the UK and from the analysis and the conceptualisation of the literature. The conceptual framework (see Figure 2.2) was used to define the key factors identified from the literature analysis and thereby acted as a guide in the development of the questionnaire.

According to Neuman (2006), quantitative surveys allow researchers to understand the behaviours, attitudes and characteristics of the participants. In this research, the questionnaire was designed to meet the research objectives in providing both details of how the local Hindu residents behave during the Festival and in determining what aspects of the Festival and its site need to be protected and maintained if commoditisation takes place in the future. The findings of Stage Three allow cautious generalisation concerning the views of the Mauritian Hindu population, which could not be achieved from the findings of the qualitative interviews undertaken in Stage Two of the research.

3.6.3.2 Sampling approach

Quantified data in events/festival and tourism studies often originate from household questionnaire surveys. These surveys are seen to be advantageous as they may be cautiously regarded as representative of the community at large, given that the sample includes people of all occupational groups and all ages (Veal 2006). According to the Districts Act 1875, the island of Mauritius is divided into nine areas, known as districts. A stratified sampling method was used to determine the number of questionnaires to be distributed in each district. Using the Housing and Population Census 2011, a representation of the targeted number of residents per district was calculated. This was based on a distribution of 600 questionnaires across all the 9 districts of the island of Mauritius. For instance, the number of questionnaire that was meant to be distributed in the district of Pamplemousses is $(136,268/1,196,383) \times 600$. Table 3.4 provides key information on the number of residents in each district, the number of questionnaires distributed and collected and the response rate per district.

Table 3.4: Number of questionnaires administered and collected

Districts	Population	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires collected	Response rate (%)
Port-Louis	118,431	60	56	93.3
Pamplemousses	136,268	68	60	88.2
Riviere Du Rempart	106,267	53	45	84.9
Flacq	135,406	68	59	86.8
Moka	82,302	41	37	90.2
Plaine Wilhems	362,292	182	165	90.7
Grand Port	110,907	56	45	80.4
Savanne	67,906	34	26	76.5
Black River	76,604	38	27	71.1
Total	1,196,383	600	520	86.7

Stratifying the sample ensured that the number of questionnaires distributed per district was proportionate to the number of residents in each district. As the Housing and Population Census 2011 had no information on the number of Hindu residents by district, this technique ensured that individuals from all districts had equal chances of being selected. Such a sampling approach, it is argued, may provide better results than a random sampling method (Barreiro and Albandoz 2001).

In order to meet the sample size of residents in each district, the following steps were undertaken to randomly select a street:

- Step 1 - A list of villages/towns in each district was noted from the local maps of the Ministry of Housing and Lands and all villages/towns in each district were assigned a number (starting from 1, 2, 3 etc.).

Step 2 - A random number generated using the RANDBETWEEN (bottom, top) function in Microsoft Excel 2010 to identify a village/town from a selected district.

Step 3 - As each town is sub-divided into wards (as defined in the Local Government Act 2011), the researcher randomly selected two wards. A number was given to each ward and a random number was generated using the RANDBETWEEN (bottom, top) to obtain the wards. Then, for each ward/village selected, a detailed map - available from the Ministry of Housing and Lands - was accessed to randomly select streets from the village or ward.

Step 4 - The questionnaires were distributed on the randomly selected street. Once on the street, the researcher picked a number, from numbers 1 to 5 written individually on pieces of paper, to randomly select the starting point by counting the houses along the street. Once the number was picked, the researcher started counting the first house on the left, then counting to the right, then to the left, and so on, in a zigzag manner until the first house to be sampled was reached. Having delivered the questionnaire at the first house, the researcher then counted 3 dwellings, starting with the next house on the opposite side of the road, in a zigzag manner down the street/road, to achieve the targeted number of Hindu respondents. If a non-Hindu opened the door or no one answered the door, the researcher then proceeded to count the next 3 dwellings, still following the zigzag pattern. In case the street ended before the researcher met the pre-determined number of surveys, the researcher repeated steps 3 and 4 to select another street to distribute questionnaires.

Step 5 - This step involved repeating Steps 2 to 4 for a second village/town in district. And where a town was selected, then steps 3 and 4 were repeated.

From the above steps, when a town was chosen, then 2 wards were randomly selected for distribution of questionnaires (see Step 3 above).

When the researcher started distributing the questionnaires in the first two districts, Moka and Savanne, he did not follow all the above steps. For these two districts, he was initially targeting 1 village at random and not two. Although the researcher did not target a second village for the districts of Moka and Savanne, the number of questionnaires distributed per district, as identified in Table 3.4, was met and it was proportionate to the number of residents in those districts. However, as the size of the districts, in terms of the proportion of population and Hindu residents, varied considerably, the researcher chose a second village/town for the remaining 7 districts.

3.6.3.3 Data collection using the drop and collect method

As explained above, Stage Three targeted Mauritian Hindu residents in all nine districts of the island as they are the ones who celebrate the Festival and their religious experiences may be affected if the Festival and site are commoditised in the future. The local Hindus' sample included Hindu residents who had participated in the Festival. It was not restricted to those who had attended the last Festival prior to the survey (i.e. in year 2014) as those who have been to an earlier festival could still provide valuable views on the religious experiences gained during the Festival and opinions on the impacts of tourism on the Festival and its site. A self-completed survey was adopted for this research. This allowed respondents to complete it at their convenience (Bryman and Bell 2003). A cover letter was attached at the beginning of each questionnaire providing information about the researcher, the research, guidance on who should fill the questionnaire, why the respondents' views were needed and lastly details of collection (see Appendix H).

The drop and collect method (DCM) is seen as a faster and more reliable procedure than face-to-face interviews and more cost effective than postal surveys because the questionnaires will be self-completed, in the respondent's own free time (Leszczynski and Zieliński 2006). The DCM also allowed the researcher to have personal contact with the person answering the door; this builds rapport/relationship which can provide an 'incentive' for respondents/potential respondents to fill out the questionnaires and, as Ibeh et al. (2002) has suggested, this increases the likelihood of response. In addition, the DCM is stated to have a high response rate (Brown 1987; Kinnear and Taylor 1991; Fox et al. 1998; Lin and Germain 1998; Ibeh et al. 2002), ranging from 50% to 90%. It was observed that out of 360 questionnaires administered in a research conducted by Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012) in Mauritius, there were 328 responses which resulted in a very high return rate of 91%. This was true for the research conducted for this Thesis, as seen through an overall high return rate of 86.7% in Table 3.4.

For the distribution of the questionnaires, once someone answered the door, the researcher introduced himself using his student card and his research, after which he asked a filtering question based on whether or not the person was a Hindu. This distribution of questionnaires was carried out from Monday to Friday (15 00 to 20 00) and on weekends from 08 00 to 20 00. When the researcher started dropping and collecting questionnaires, he noted that these times were best as most people/respondents were more available then. Also, the colleagues/assistants helping the researcher to drop and collect questionnaires were also available during those times.

To help with the drop and collect of the questionnaires, the researcher recruited two colleagues, through the help of friends, who accompanied him everywhere throughout the island, to distribute the questionnaires to the selected houses, as described in Section 3.6.3.2. Additionally, in certain districts, the researcher managed to get the help of locals to distribute and collect questionnaires, because it was less time consuming for them to collect the questionnaires, compared to the

researcher having to travel every time to go and collect the questionnaires, costing more time and money. All those assisting, were trained to give out questionnaires and to check that the questionnaires were properly filled when collecting. Although the majority of questionnaires were dropped by the researcher, a total of 24 questionnaires were delivered by these assistants as the researcher could not deliver them due to personal reasons, family issues or meetings. Nevertheless, the researcher gave the assistant a phone call later to ensure the procedures for delivering the questionnaires had been conformed with and if they encountered any difficulties, which was not the case.

When questionnaires were dropped, the researcher kept a control sheet to allow easy recovery of questionnaires once it was filled. Concurrently, the assistants kept their own records so that they could pick up the questionnaires when the researcher was unable to collect them. On administering the questionnaires, the researcher introduced the assistants to the respondents. This helped in that the respondents knew that they could trust the assistants to return the questionnaires safely: this facilitated the collection of questionnaire by the assistants.

A 2-day period was initially given to respondents before collection of the surveys. It was planned that if the survey was not completed within the 2 days (Timeframe 1), or if a respondent required further time to complete the questionnaire, he/she would be given a further 2 days (Timeframe 2). However, Timeframe 2 proved not to be practical due to many reasons: cyclonic weather conditions, flooding in certain areas, public holidays, including New Year festivities. As the researcher started distributing questionnaires on the 29 December 2014, he was under a strict time constraint to distribute the targeted number of 600 questionnaires throughout the island and collect at least 400 completed questionnaires before the day of the next Festival, the 17th February 2015. So, practically, it was not always possible to adhere to Timeframe 2, as by that time the researcher was either distributing questionnaires on another road or in another district, and by the time distribution was completed on a road it would already be night-time. As a result, Timeframe 2 was changed from 2 days to 4-6 days to reflect the practicalities. The researcher also provided his mobile number on all the questionnaires, so that firstly any issue with the questionnaire could be discussed with the researcher at any time, and secondly when the respondents were unable to give the questionnaire back within Timeframe 1, they could, if they wished, contact the researcher to arrange for another time for the researcher to pick up the completed questionnaire. When the researcher went to collect the questionnaire, he checked, there and then, if all the questions were answered. Where the surveys were incomplete, the researcher or his colleagues read the question(s) to the respondent, and offered to clarify misunderstandings or misinterpretations, before noting the answer.

As stated in the previous paragraph, the researcher's target was to end up with at least 400 valid questionnaires. In order to meet this number of completed questionnaires, the researcher distributed 600 questionnaires, on the basis of a hoped-for response rate of 66.7%, collected randomly across

the nine districts of the island. A number of considerations were taken into account to determine the sample size such as cost and time, intended method of analysis, nature of research and population that was being studied (Clark et al. 1998; Adams et al. 2007). The targeted sample size of 400 was chosen given that this number would allow the researcher to carry out the methods of analysis envisaged. For instance, this sample size would involve enough people to cross compare groups for the inferential analysis.

Of the 600 questionnaires administered, the researcher collected a total of 538 questionnaires across the nine districts of the island of Mauritius. However, eight questionnaires were unusable as they were blank or half-filled, because the respondents refused to fill it completely. As the research sought to understand the views and attitudes of the local Hindu residents who had participated at least once in the Festival, three questionnaires were excluded because the respondents had never participated in the Festival and a further seven questionnaires were omitted as the respondents considered themselves as being non-believers: those who do not believe and do not attend religious services.

As there was a discrepancy in the number of questionnaires returned with a higher response from males 314 (60.4%) than females 206 (39.6%), 108 questionnaires answered by males were randomly removed from the data file to make the overall survey representative of the ratio of males to females, between 18 and 70 years old, in the Hindu population of the island of Mauritius (Housing and Population Census 2011). This resulted in 206 questionnaires for both of males and females, making a total of 412 usable questionnaires for the analyses, as seen in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Number of usable questionnaires by district

Districts	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires collected	Number of questionnaires left after removing extra males
Port-Louis	60	56	41
Pamplemousses	68	60	47
Riviere Du Rempart	53	45	36
Flacq	68	59	45
Moka	41	37	31
Plaine Wilhems	182	165	135
Grand Port	56	45	37
Savanne	34	26	20
Black River	38	27	20
Total	600	520	412

3.6.3.4 Difficulties encountered for the quantitative approach

There were some limitations to the quantitative research. For example, when the researcher left the survey, he planned to ask the residents to get the survey completed by the person whose birthday

was the most recent and that he/she is at least 18 years old. This approach was seen as a non-intrusive method of randomly selecting the respondents, and as Smith (2010) stated, would have ensured diversity of the respondents. Additionally, by knowing who would have answered the questionnaire, the researcher could firstly analyse these answers against who actually completed the questionnaires, from profile of respondents and secondly the researcher would be able to assess whether non-response followed a pattern. However, this question was not well received by respondents, with some not revealing who had their next birthday, some not remembering who had the next birthday in the house. Therefore, asking for the person whose birthday was next was not practical, and so the researcher stopped asking for details of the person whose birthday was next in the house. Nevertheless, the covering letter handed to all households mentioned that the person in the household with the next birthday, being at least 18 years old, should complete the questionnaire. Unfortunately, there is no way to verify whether, or not, this request was adhered to. This could be a reason why the number of males was higher in the sample and later had to be removed to make the sample representative. It may also be a cultural practice given that the male respondents who took the questionnaire were more likely to complete it themselves.

There were some problems encountered by the researcher while dropping and collecting the questionnaires. For example, some respondents did not like that the researcher and/or the colleagues entered, or wanted to enter, their properties: they talked rudely and did not accept to take the questionnaires. Yet, there were others, who did not fall in line with the zigzag pattern, who asked the researcher why they did not get a questionnaire to fill in as they were willing to answer it. When collecting questionnaires many respondents voiced that they were not happy to answer about their caste (Question 44) in the questionnaire. Some even phoned the researcher to complain about it. Altogether, three people reacted a little aggressively when the researcher collected the questionnaire. One even stated that the profile questions were too personal and so there was no way for the researcher to guarantee any anonymity and confidentiality. Overall, however less than 10 people reacted badly and apart for these hurdles, the respondents were generally very welcoming.

3.6.3.5 *Design of the questionnaire*

The questionnaire was printed, double-sided, on A4 size paper. It was eight pages long and had a total of 46 questions. Each questionnaire had a unique code number enabling the researcher to identify where each questionnaire was delivered, thereby facilitating the keeping of a record, during data collection, on a control sheet, as to where it was delivered to and where to collect it from. A copy of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix H. The questionnaire was in English as this is the official language in Mauritius, although French is also extensively used (Republic of Mauritius 2017). Several aspects were taken into consideration when the questionnaire was designed, as these may have serious repercussions on the quality as well as nature of responses (McColl et al. 2001). These concerned the type of questions, the size of the questionnaire, the details on the questionnaire (Fowler 2002) and the wording of the questions (Bryman 2004; Veal 2011).

Veal (2011) has specified that the questions should be as simple as possible and should be written to avoid jargon, ambiguity and leading questions. He also added that questions should be asked one at a time, as opposed to asking questions which have multi-purpose. These good practices were followed to enhance the quality of the question wording. Overall the questionnaire was designed to have a developmental order and be logical (Gillham 2000) thereby allowing a flow for those reading and filling the questionnaires.

The questionnaire included a few open-ended questions, as suggested Gillham (2000). Open-ended questions are those which, do not have a proscribed set of answers and require respondents to write down their thoughts (Veal 2011). The advantage of including these questions is that the responses by the respondents are not induced by either the interviewer himself or the wording of the questionnaire (Veal 2011). As a result, these responses can offer rich and varied information. However, the disadvantage of open-ended questions is that their analysis may be a lengthy and laborious process, ending with results which are no more informative than a structured closed-ended question. Another disadvantage is that the response rate for this type of question may be rather low either because respondents are lazy, do not have time, or have literacy problems. Therefore, it is up to the researcher to judge how many open- and closed- ended questions should be included in a questionnaire (Veal 2011). The questionnaire for the current study was designed with four open-ended questions, namely Q4, Q11, Q12 and Q16.

The questionnaire also included closed-ended questions that provided respondents with a list of answers, requiring them to choose and mark them accordingly. Veal (2011) has suggested that the marking is normally done by ticking the box(es). When the questionnaire was designed for the current study, the researcher asked respondents to mark each box with a cross. Despite this, a few respondents used a tick as opposed to cross to mark the questionnaire. The researcher did not oblige the respondents to put a cross, and the ticks were allowed.

By providing a set of answers to choose from, it was ensured that the respondents had the same set of options to consider. Moreover, Veal (2011) contends that the disadvantages of closed-ended questions are that these may be lengthy, especially for the less literate, and as a result the responses further down the response list can become under-represented. Nevertheless, Saunders et al. (2012) stated that these questions can normally be answered easily and quickly due to a minimum writing required and the answers are fairly simple to compare because the options are pre-set.

The questionnaire was divided in three parts. The first part of the questionnaire was divided into six sections and concerned the respondents' participation characteristics, the activities performed and their associated religious experiences in the four components of the Festival (the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja) and their overall evaluation of participating in the Festival. The design of each section is discussed below:

1. The first section related to the participation characteristics of the respondents during the last Festival. Here, the respondents were asked if they had participated in the Festival (Q1). If they did, they had to keep filling the questionnaire, and if they did not, they were required to move to the last section to answer on their profile. This section included self-coded quantity questions to denote how many years they participated in the Festival between 2010 and 2014 (Q2) and in which year they last participated (Q3). Based on their last year of participation, the respondents were asked an open-ended question on the two most important reasons for participating in the Festival (Q4). Lastly, Q5 was a list question, requiring the respondents to choose with whom they went with the last time they participated in the Festival. This question related to inter-personal authenticity. Wang (1999) had identified that when family members together go on a trip, their 'family ties' are strengthened, making them experience an authentic togetherness. In the context of the study, the Festival is celebrated not only with family members, but also with friends. Reflecting this, Q5 was a listing question which provided the respondents with a list of options to reflect participation with friends.
2. The second section related to the preparation component of the Festival. This section had a self-coded quantity question, on the number of days the respondents dedicated to their preparation (Q6), as the preparation time for the Festival differs from individual to individual, depending on several factors, for example on the length of fast that one undertook, the building of Kanwar, cleaning of house and so on. Q7 provided the respondents with a list to identify what they did in the lead up to the Festival. This was measured using a nominal scale of 'Yes' or 'No' to provide data on the proportion of participants who participated in each of the activities they participated in. Q8 used the Likert item rating scale. This is done for collecting opinion data (Saunders et al. 2012), with the responses being able to be quantified (Veal 2011). The questions used a four-point Likert item rating scale, with the options '1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Less Important, 4=Not Important', with a last option 'No View' being treated in the analyses as a missing value. The option 'No View' reflects the responses where the respondents do not know what to answer based on a lack of knowledge (Fowler 2002). For ease of reading, the options for all rating questions were presented in a straight line, as opposed to being presented in a column, because respondents are likely to process data in this manner (Dillman 2009). Questions on the activities performed by the respondents and the importance questions were also part of the other three components, namely the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja.

3. The third section was concerned with the journey to and from Ganga Talao. It included an open-ended question requiring the respondents to indicate from where they started their journey (Q9) and the reason for choosing their mode of travel (Q11, Q12). Those who travelled by transport were also asked what religious experiences they think they missed out on, had they been walking (Q16). The open-ended questions allowed the respondents to freely give their reasons and/or the augmented religious experiences arising from walking or using other modes of travel and resulting in what they might have lost by not walking, with no influence from the interviewer. Other questions in this section included list questions on how the respondents travelled to the site (Q10), how long it took them to complete their journey (Q13), and the activities they carried out as part of their journey (Q14). Also, a Likert item rating scale was used to determine the importance of the attributes contributing to their religious experiences during the journey to and from Ganga Talao component (Q15).
4. The fourth section related to the respondents' visit at Ganga Talao. This section used a self-coded quantity question to help determine the respondents' length of stay at the site during the Festival (Q17). Also, same as the previous sections, it included questions on the activities they performed measured using a nominal scale of 'Yes' or 'No' (Q18) and the importance questions for their visit to Ganga Talao (Q19).
5. The fifth section dealt with the final component of the Festival, Char Pahar ki Pooja. In this section, the respondents provided responses for whether they attended the Char Pahar ki Pooja (Q20), and how many of the prayers they stayed for out of the four prayers were carried out during the night (Q22). They were also provided with a list of options to choose from relating to where they attended the Char Pahar ki Pooja (Q21) and what activities they did (Q23). For this type of question, it was important to define the answers clearly and meaningfully (Saunders et al. 2012). Keeping in mind that most of the respondents were likely to choose to perform the all-night prayer either at their local temples or at the sacred site, Ganga Talao, the researcher also provided the option 'other', in Q21, for those who did not pray at the other two locations. This proved a correct decision as there were some participants who went to pray at another location. The option 'other' therefore allowed the respondent to provide a complete list of answers, with the respondents providing any information which was not included in the set of answers. This section also contained the questions on what activities they carried out during these four-sets of prayers (Q23) and the importance attached to participation in each of the activities (Q24), similar to the other three components of the Festival.

6. The last section was based on the overall evaluation of participating in the last Festival. In this section, a likelihood type rating question was used to examine the outcome of the respondents' personal feelings that resulted from participating in the Festival (Q25). This question was based on a five-point scale with options '(1) Not at all, (2) A little, (3) Moderately, (4) Quite a bit and (5) Entirely'. Next, a five-point semantic differential scale was used to measure their emotions. Each bipolar scale was defined by opposing emotions, for example 'I felt happy' opposing 'I felt sad'. The two opposing emotions were separated by a five-point scale to allow the respondents to reflect their most likely emotions when participating in the Festival. The last three questions in this section (Q27, Q28, Q29), were based on a four-point Likert item rating scale, as discussed above.

The second part of the questionnaire explored the level of agreement with reasons for taking part in the Festival, the respondents' existential attitudes towards the authentic character of the Festival and site and the potential implications of commoditisation, resulting from a significant increase in the number of tourists, of the Festival and site:

1. In dealing with the respondents' attitudes towards the extent to which they agreed or disagreed on the reasons why it was important to take part in the Festival (Q30), a four-point Likert item scale, with '1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree', was used. Q31 asked the respondents to rate how important each of the items in a list of fifteen statements were to their view of the authentic character of the Festival during their last participation. A four-point Likert item rating scale was used with '1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Less Important and 4=Not Important'. This question helped to assess (a) which features of the Festival were perceived as important in bringing about their existential authenticity and (b) which activities needed to be preserved if commoditisation of the site and Festival were to take place.
2. The section concluded with three sets of questions (Q32, Q33 and Q34) to assess the respondents' attitudes towards the commoditisation of the Festival and its site. These were based on the level of agreement, using a four-point Likert item rating scale, on the stated outcomes in the likely event of a significant increase in the number of tourist for the Festival.

The third part of the questionnaire sought to establish the profile of respondents, looking at their demographics and psychographics. It consisted of a mixture of different types of questions set to assess who filled the questionnaires. For instance, Q38, Q40, Q41, Q44 and Q45 were based on list questions, Q35, Q39 and Q43 were measured using nominal scale and Q42 and Q46 were self-coded quantity questions. These questions allowed the respondents to provide the answers that best

suited their profile and personal information. These questions were put in the last section of the questionnaire, as suggested by Oppenheim (1992).

3.6.3.6 Data analysis

The researcher coded and quantified the quantitative data, and then analysed it using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23). SPSS helped reducing the time for data analysis (Bryman and Cramer 2005). Two types of analysis were used for this research: descriptive and inferential analyses.

Descriptive analysis concerns the data which a researcher has in hand; the analysis involves the use of tables, graphic displays or summary statistics to understand the data (Bernard 2018) using means or frequencies (percentages and number of responses) to present key results (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). The inferential analysis relates to making inferences about a larger population (Chowdhury et al. 2011; Bernard 2018). This analysis examined the association between two variables, one dependent variable (e.g. wear white clothes as a sign of purification) and one independent variable (e.g. gender of the respondent), in order to investigate the strength of these associations in terms of what they did and how they evaluated things. The three reasons for choosing male and female of respondents as the basis of the inferential analysis in the current study are given below.

Firstly, it was important to determine if gender may potentially differ in terms of behaviour, attitudes and religious experiences. Several factors may be responsible for why such difference may exist in terms of gender. For example, a difference in gender responses may be due to the social and contextual influences. Miller and Hoffmann (1995) have argued that as women tend to be more caring, passive, compliant and obedient than men, these traits allow them to be more religiously aware. As such, women may respond more to religion, compared to men. Moreover, Smith (2016) has indicated that the situation may be changing now with more Hindu women playing a role in public life. For instance, many middle-class Hindu women have good education and undertake responsible high-level jobs outside their homes. Despite such a change in Hindu society, Smith (2016) has argued that modernity does not affect the difference in gender roles.

Secondly, in the Hindu calendar, each festival is celebrated distinctively with its particular rites, stories, songs, food preparation. Flueckiger (2015) argues that the way a festival is celebrated can vary according to someone's gender, caste, region or family. In Hinduism, gender is often referred as 'male caste' and 'female caste' (Furseth and Repstad 2006; Smith 2016). Differences in gender can account for a distinction in the way a female undertakes a fast or her role in society as compared to a male (Smith 2016). For instance, fasting for a Hindu woman is a ritual performed to bring prosperity, abundance and auspiciousness and that can be undertaken in a variety of ways including consuming vegetables and sweets and being dressed in new clothes and using items such

as flowers, vermilion and turmeric (Flueckiger 2015). Women are known to have a major role in undertaking such fasting in addition to vows and prayers to the Gods in an attempt to fulfil their roles of looking after their homes and the well-being of their family (Smith 2016). By fasting, they can not only strengthen their relationship with God, but also bring auspiciousness to their own lives, their family lives and their homes (Flueckiger 2015).

Thirdly, from the Western perspective, there is a difference in the way women and men respond to religion (Furseth and Repstad 2006). It is argued that women give more importance to the community and aspects of connectedness when involved in religious participation. Also, in experiencing religious experiences, women were seen to put more importance on aspects of caring and the community. Ozorak (1996) has argued that differences in gender in Hinduism may be responsible for the difference in the way an individual experiences God and faith. For instance, women are more concerned with the building of relationship with God and others, emphasising on relationships, while men put more emphasis on the power and judgement of God and their personal spiritual discipline, emphasising on individualisation (Ozorak 1996). Therefore, understanding the differences in gender is seen as an appropriate choice for this study.

Inferential analysis was carried out through hypothesis testing. The research used two non-parametric techniques for the data analysis: Chi-square tests for independence (X^2) and Mann-Whitney U tests. The Chi-square test was used to establish the relationship between two variables. In essence, it compared the observed frequencies to the expected frequencies, and whether there was a difference in the distribution of the categorical variables by gender. Data was analysed with estimations being within 95% confidence level; where the probability (p) value was 0.05 or less, the null hypothesis was rejected showing that there was a statistically significant difference between the dependent variable and the gender of the respondent. Where there were significant differences and the null hypothesis was rejected, the effect size was noted. The effect size was determined using Cohen's (1988) criteria, where 0.1 represents a small effect, 0.3 shows a medium effect and 0.5 or more indicates a large effect.

The Mann-Whitney U tests were used to test whether there was a significant difference between two independent groups in terms of a dependent variable. The independent variable was gender (males and females) while the dependent variable was an ordinal measurement based on Likert item scale to rank the level of importance the participants attached to the undertaking of a number of activities. This test can then be used to assess whether, or not, there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups (Pallant 2016) based on (p) value being 0.05 or less, and the null hypothesis being rejected.

For both the Mann-Whitney U test and Chi-square test, where p was more than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis was not rejected: there was no statistically significant difference by gender. If p was equal to or less than 0.5 the results were statistically different by gender. Where the tests showed

statistically significant differences effect sizes were also presented. For the Mann-Whitney test, the size effects were calculated using the formula $r = (z / \text{square root of } N)$ where N is the total number of cases (Pallant 2016). Using the criteria $r = 0.1$ representing a small effect, $r = 0.3$ showing a medium effect and $r = 0.5$ or more indicating a large effect (Cohen 1988), the effect sizes were determined. Also, the lowest mean rank of the Mann-Whitney test gives an indication which group between male or female had the highest number of lower score value.

3.6.3.7 Alternative analyses – the potential use of multivariate analysis

The previous sub-section (3.6.3.6) explained the nature and application of the quantitative analyses that were conducted within this research. The research made use of two types of analysis: univariate (previously labelled descriptive) and bivariate (previously labelled inferential). Univariate analysis involves data being analysed based on a single variable. Bivariate analysis uses two variables for data analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). Both descriptive and inferential analyses were employed within the study as they were considered appropriate for meeting the aim and objectives of this mixed methods research. The results in *Chapter 5* and *Chapter 7*, reporting on the results of the quantitative research, demonstrate that the assessment was correct. However, there is a third type of quantitative analysis which could have been used - multivariate analysis.

Multivariate analysis, an extended version of univariate and bivariate analyses (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013) and can be used to analyse three or more variables at the same time (Bryman 2016). More specifically, multivariate analysis techniques analyse multiple dependent and independent variables simultaneously (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). Within multivariate analysis Hair et al. (2017) have identified two sets of multivariate techniques, namely exploratory and confirmatory. Exploratory analysis techniques may involve methods such as cluster analysis, partial least squares structural equation modelling, exploratory factor analysis whilst confirmatory analysis techniques include analysis of variance, multiple regression, covariance-based structural equation modelling for multivariate analysis. Hair et al. (2017) has indicated that confirmatory multivariable analysis can be used to test the hypotheses of existing concepts and theories. Alternatively, exploratory multivariable analysis can be used to identify patterns in the data where there is either little or no prior knowledge on how the variables are associated (Hair et al. 2017). In general, multivariate analysis is a powerful tool and all the multivariate analysis techniques have strong predictive and analytical capabilities, thus creating and advancing knowledge (Hair et al. 2014). However, this research did not adopt multivariate analysis techniques for the reasons provided below.

First, the study is a mixed methods study where the two parts, the qualitative and the quantitative, are both contributing to meeting the aim of the study and the objectives. The two parts, quantitative and qualitative, are devised together to give the full picture.

Second, the objectives set in this research could be met without multivariate analysis. At the outset bivariate analysis techniques, which are simpler and less complex analytical techniques compared to those involved in multivariate analysis, were used in the study as they would meet the research objectives, given the complementary qualitative part of the study. The univariate and bivariate analyses conducted revealed the overall patterns of behaviour, experiences, the importance participants attached to different parts of their experiences during the Festival and their views on authenticity and commoditisation. It did so, based on analyses focusing on gender, for reasons explained in Section 3.6.3.6. However, there were other possible independent variables built into the design of the questionnaire, but which have not been included in the Thesis. The other possibilities for being the independent variable included age, caste and level of religious observance. Apart from level of observance, which may be subject to common method bias, the others could be returned to in the future. Thus, the research adopted bivariate analysis (inferential statistics) and complemented the qualitative work.

Third, as the study progressed to the analysis stage the analyses that could be conducted on the data was reconsidered. However, time became a constraint on using multivariate analysis (learning curve and implementation of whichever multivariate analyses that were relevant) and, as a result, additional multivariate analysis at that point in this study was ruled out. The reason for the time constraint was that, as stated earlier in Section 3.6.2.4.5, the data collection in Mauritius took longer than expected - 10 months – as did the qualitative work. As a result, the choice of not adopting multivariate analysis was based on a reflective judgement of what could be achieved within the course of the PhD, especially as the research was based on a mixed methods approach and therefore there was a substantial qualitative analysis required. Adding in multivariate analysis, be that a relatively simple process (exploratory factor analysis) or a relatively more involved process (partial least squares SEM analysis), would have taken considerable additional time.

Fourth, like many other analyses, multivariate analysis has drawbacks. As Wuensch (2019) comments there may be different directions the analysis can go and as a result two researchers may easily reach quite different conclusions. In addition, the mechanics of doing the analysis may be easy to grasp but it is not so easy to interpret the output of the software. The identification of relationships between or among multiple variables and interpretation of the results is demanding as well as the identification of the number of variables (dependent and independent) is problematic. As Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) have commented the use of too many variables in an analysis gives rise to what is known as ‘overfitting’ the sample which in turn makes the results difficult for generalisation to a population, thus defeating the purpose of undertaking a quantitative approach. Furthermore, the number of variables in a multivariate analysis can have other implications for the “*meaning and theoretical relationships among the variables*” (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013, p.11). Lastly, multivariate analysis may at times need a theory to be reformulated, more precisely when the findings within a study do not directly have a relation with the hypothesis (Bryman and Cramer 2005). This is an issue when not every individual in a sample has relationships with the variables.

Hence, using multivariate analysis as part of a research may not always answer the research questions (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013).

Overall, for the reasons above, multivariate analysis was not conducted in this study. However, it is likely that the use of multivariate analyses will be explored on the data in the future. While multivariate analysis may have added to the study, the use of univariate and bivariate analyses did provide results that met the specific quantitative objectives of the research. In addition, the quantitative research was designed as part of a mixed method study. The quantitative and qualitative research were designed to be taken together rather than as separate pieces of research. Together the quantitative and qualitative research complement each other and have met the objectives of the research.

3.6.3.8 Evaluating quantitative research

Quantitative research can be evaluated through validity and reliability. Validity relates to “*whether a measure of a concept really measures that concept*” (Bryman 2016, p.158). In terms of the validity of the questionnaire, researchers often refer to content validity which relates whether the scale used offers enough coverage into the questions of the questionnaire (Saunders et al. 2012). Adequate coverage was achieved by reviewing the literature (Saunders et al. 2012) and designing and implementing the questionnaire for the quantitative research following the best practice (Bryman 2008). External validity can also be used to evaluate quantitative research (Finn et al. 2000). External validity refers to “*the degree to which findings can be generalised across social settings*” (Bryman 2016, p. 384). The researcher ensured that details for the context of the research are provided in *Chapter 1*. This will make it easier for other researchers to transfer the findings to other similar research concerning a religious festival involving pilgrimage.

Reliability relates to whether the results will be consistent if the study is conducted more than once (Bernard 2018). Reliability can be assessed through test-retest reliability and internal consistency (Pallant 2016). The test-retest reliability can be evaluated by administering the same questionnaire to the same people on two separate occasions (Punch 2005; Pallant 2016). The current research did not involve the test-retest method, but it assessed reliability by adopting accepted practice on how the research was carried out as well as through internal consistency. The test used to measure internal reliability was Cronbach’s coefficient alpha (Pallant 2016).

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a detailed explanation of the approach and methods used in the research. A pragmatic approach using a mixed methods design was adopted to meet the overarching aim and objectives of the research. In adopting a mixed methods design, the study also addresses a key gap

in the literature in that only a limited amount of research has to date used this approach in religious festival and pilgrimage studies.

The adoption of a mixed methods approach in this, and other research, can lead to a more complete and rounded understanding of the topic under investigation (see Section 3.4.2.2). More specifically, this study assesses the relationship between different sets of stakeholders (the Mauritian Religious Authorities, the 'Public Sector' organisations and the local Hindu residents) and whether, in terms of understanding the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival and the perceived possible impacts of promoting and developing the Festival and its site as a tourist attraction on the religious experiences for the local Hindu residents, their views coincide or are in conflict with each other. The use of a mixed methods approach helped both in gathering rich exploratory information from the qualitative approach and allowing cautious generalisability to the population through the quantitative method.

The next four chapters present the findings of the study. More precisely, *Chapter 4* presents the results from the qualitative interviews with the RAs and *Chapter 5* reports the results of the quantitative surveys on the religious experiences offered by the Festival to the participants. While *Chapter 6* provides the views of the RAs and PS, *Chapter 7* sets out the responses of the local Hindu residents who had participated in the Festival, on the existential authenticity of the religious experiences at the Festival and site as well as their evaluation of the possible effects of commoditising the Festival and its site for more tourists. These four chapters explain the results of the qualitative and quantitative research. In *Chapter 8*, the results/findings are critically discussed and evaluated.

CHAPTER 4: PERCEPTIONS OF THE MAURITIAN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES IN RESPECT OF THE CORE AND THE AUGMENTED RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OFFERED BY THE FESTIVAL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the first of the four findings chapters of the study. It is based on the analyses of interviews conducted with eight representatives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) on the religious significance of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) for the Mauritian Hindu community. Based upon the views of this set of stakeholder, this chapter also explores the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival for the local Hindu participants (participants). The chapter analyses the views of the RAs to address the following three objectives:

1. To establish what is the religious significance of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri for the Mauritian Hindu community.
2. To identify and explore what constitutes the perceived *core religious experiences* for the participants during the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri.
3. To determine which factors are considered by the RAs to augment the religious experiences offered by the Festival above that experienced or gained by the participants through their observance of normal everyday religious practices.

The chapter has three sections corresponding to these objectives. Starting with Section 4.2, in which the RAs outline the religious meanings of the Festival for those of the Hindu faith. Sections 4.3 and 4.4 then highlight the themes that emerged from the interviews on the overall *core religious experiences* and the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* respectively in relation to the four components of the Festival: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja.

In each of these three sections, the emerged theme is introduced followed by examples of supporting quotations from the interviews being presented in a box. For each quotation, text in square brackets indicates one of the following: (a) the use of extra probing questions, (b) the provision of extra explanations for a particular term, or (c) interpretation of what the representative

inferred. Also, within many of the quotations specific text is highlighted through background shading; this denotes key words/sentences which are relevant to themes and/or sub-themes. In addition, within the chapter/boxes, the RAs are categorised into two groups: three ‘on-site’ religious authorities (ORA1, ORA2 and ORA3) and five ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisations (ORO1, ORO2, ORO3, ORO4 and ORO5), as outlined in Section 3.6.2.4.1. Each of these organisations is involved in delivering, managing and/or advising on the Festival.

4.2 THE VIEWS OF THE MAURITIAN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FESTIVAL

4.2.1 Background

This section presents the views of the representatives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) in Mauritius on the religious significance of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival). It covers the significance of the Festival for the local Hindu community in general, regardless of any participation in the Festival, and for local Hindus as a result of their participation in the Festival.

Figure 4.1 displays the four themes that emerged from the analyses of the interviews, namely (1) ‘celebrating the splendour of the Supreme divinity’, (2) ‘religious significance of the Festival’, (3) ‘performing core religious actions’ and (4) ‘fostering religious and social identity’.



Figure 4.1: The four themes relating to the significance of the Festival

4.2.2 Celebrating the splendour of the Supreme divinity

This theme focuses on the characteristics of, and the importance attached to, Lord Shiva for the local Hindu community. Out of the eight representatives of the RAs, six set out the view of their organisations on this emerging theme. The responses of three representatives are provided in Box 4.1.

Box 4.1: Quotations from the RAs representing the theme ‘celebrating the splendour of the Supreme divinity’

ORA2	“...Maha Shivaratri is the main festival...celebrated in this country. For us, for Mauritians especially for people of the Hindu faith, a lot of importance is given to Shiva [Lord Shiva] because He is the Supreme God . The religious significance, for the participants who walk, is that it is a grand festival ; it is the great night of Lord Shiva.”
ORA3	“...it is an occasion for the Shaivas [the followers/believers of Lord Shiva] to appreciate Lord Shiva for what He did for Humanity during the ‘manthan’ [churning], the poison nobody wanted, he drank it. In recognition of this, at least the Hindus do reverence to Him. It is an important pillar for the Hindu Shaivas. ”
ORO5	“...Lord Shiva is one of the most important figures of the trinity in Hinduism . He is the one who is responsible for the dissolution of the universe and of each cycle. ”

The three RAs endorsed Lord Shiva for his unique qualities. For instance, the heroic characteristic (according to Hindu scriptures) of Lord Shiva in terms of imbibing the poison to save humanity was related by ORA3. As such, the followers of Lord Shiva, *Shaivas*, celebrate the Festival to pay reverence to Him. This was strongly stated by ORA2 and ORO5. Overall the RAs attached major importance to this annual Festival as it gives the local Hindu community the opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty, religious commitment and belief, and to perpetuate their culture and traditions through practicing their religion. The massive congregation of the participants for the Festival creates special, distinct and memorable religious experiences, thus making it one of the main Hindu religious festivals on the island of Mauritius (ORA2).

4.2.3 Religious significance of the Festival

This theme emerged from the analyses of five out of the eight interviews of the RAs. The views of four representatives, two from the ‘on-site’ religious authorities and two from ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisations, are given in Box 4.2.

Box 4.2: Quotations from the RAs representing the theme ‘religious significance of the Festival’

ORA2	“...while doing the rituals, all their wishes are accomplished...The greatest significance is we are perpetuating our culture, tradition, and dharma [duty]... ”
ORA3	“For them it is a big thing because Shivji’s prayers that they perform make them feel something positive in their lives...For the Festival [amongst Hindu, most specifically among the Sanatanists, the followers of Shiva] the focus is on Lord Shiva. It means that for those Hindus in Mauritius, the Shaivas...it becomes a necessary pillar at least once a year to join together so that they can submerge themselves in the vibrations and find Lord Shiva...the Festival shows force [referring to unity]...that in Hinduism also we have a major event , which teaches the significance of: who Shivji is, why we offer water, why we pray Ganga...It is an event to show God that... we are offering water and we say that in our life we are making a sacrifice so that God always gives us water and that we do not die without water, and that everybody benefits from this water...And people think that praying Shivji is a prayer for water...For the Festival, you see that on Shivji’s head itself there is water. Water falls from his “Jatta” [hair]...When one person prays, it is one person, but when...

Box 4.2 (continued): Quotations from the RAs representing the theme ‘religious significance of the Festival’

ORA3	<i>...there are a thousand people praying, the vibration that comes has an effect on those people and also on the environment...this is a renewal of our belief”</i>
ORO4	<i>“The local Hindu people are of two views. One group they don’t pray to idols and the other group they believe in idols. They are both Hindus, yet the Hindu religion is very vast like the ocean: we have Hindus who believe in god, Hindus who do not believe in god, Hindus who do several types of prayers (they pray to several deities), Hindus who believe in and pray to one deity...So those who believe in Lord Shiva, they go there [Ganga Talao] and they believe that Lord Shiva is the God who gives them power and energy to do everything...This is the place where you get peace of mind, feel extremely happy, feel peaceful and are freed from trouble because God will give you a solution...It’s a place worth visiting once in a lifetime”</i>
ORO5	<i>“Hinduism talks about dharma [righteousness], material happiness and prosperity, family life and lastly the moksha [liberation of the life and death cycle]...So the Festival is not only an occasion for the Hindus to be exempted from the shortcomings of the bad things we might have committed in our past life towards those who were dear to us, vis-à-vis our family, etc., but it is also an occasion that God allows us to unite with Him during this great night. And...for the Festival...we have got the blessing of God, we can expect total liberation...”</i>

As mentioned by ORO4 there are different types of Hindus, for instance those who believe in idols, those who do not believe in idols, those who believe in one deity or several deities, and so on. Given the complexity of the Mauritian Hindu community, the religious significance of the Festival may differ from individual to individual. For example, each may hold different views on performing religious duty, focusing on God, renewing belief, receiving blessings, overcoming difficulties and feeling positive in life, getting closer to God and visiting the sacred site. However, overall, participation by the local Hindu community in the Festival is seen, by the RAs, as a means to demonstrate their sense of commitment, responsibility, encouragement and inspiration vis-à-vis their religion, traditions, embodiment and society. These were considered as essential characteristics for the perpetuation of the religious and cultural traditions. In addition, the involvement of the local Hindu community in the Festival allows the individuals to demonstrate a greater sense of unity and force (ORA3). This enables them to express their religious identity as Hindus. ORA3 also discussed the significance of using water during the Festival, in particular the use of the sacred water from Ganga Talao. The sacred water was seen as being very important in attracting the local Hindu community to the sacred site. The collection of the sacred water enables the Mauritian Hindu community to have a collective experience allowing them to feel an attachment to Ganga Talao.

4.2.4 Performing core religious actions

The core religious actions are expressed through worshipping and making personal sacrifices during the Festival. This theme emerged from the analyses of six out of the eight RAs. The views of four organisations are illustrated in Box 4.3.

Box 4.3: Quotations from the RAs representing the theme ‘performing core religious actions’

ORA3	“...at least once a year they make sacrifice , it's an occasion to fast 10 days, 15 days , some do fast for a month . It depends how long people want to fast. Some people fast, they consume food that have salt, but no meat . There are some people who do not eat food with salt at all; they eat only sweets for the duration of this fast .”
ORO3	“...and it is a very very big sacrifice when they [participants who walk] fast, they leave their place for 3-4 days and walk to Grand-Bassin, they pray and return by walking, sleep here and there , right, it is an extraordinary sacrifice .”
ORO4	“...they give some penance to themselves...it helps, it purifies the mind ...it helps people, they feel some compassion when they have done something wrong and it's a time for them to ask for forgiveness and to clear their minds and to do good for people in future and to help people in future and to do good for everyone .”
ORO5	“For the Hindus, it is the number one festival for renewing oneself ...it is a mystic voyage, very spiritual ...For the layman [a typical local Hindu participant], <i>Maha Shivaratri</i> is fasting, going to Grand-Bassin on foot, have fun on the road, return home, do Pooja during the night and it's done. Then the next day, end [terminate] the fast, then it is a big party.”

An overall view of the ‘journey’ of a participant and his/her core religious actions, such as fasting, praying and undertaking the walk, was provided by ORO5. Predominantly, the sacrifice undertaken by the participants for the Festival was identified by both ORA3 and ORO3. The representative of ORA3 acknowledged that the participants endure sacrifice through fasting which can be varied in terms of the type of food consumed over the course of the Festival and the duration of the fast. In contrast, the walk per se was described as an extraordinary sacrifice (ORO3) as the participant would not be able to experience the usual lifestyle he/she is used to in his/her normal daily life.

The Festival was seen by the RAs as an opportunity for local Hindus to undergo penance and this in turn had psychological/mental effects on the participants (ORO4). As such, the participants can be transformed as they have the opportunity to be cleansed or purified from their sins. The transformation involves a change in the participants as a result of performing core religious actions for the Festival. ORO4 added that by asking for forgiveness, a participant purifies his/her mind and this equips him/her to do good for others in the future. As a result, performing these religious activities can be seen as having both a physical and mental influence on the participants.

Worshipping and walking are seen, by all representatives of the RAs, as physical actions carried out by the participants. For example, the walk is a sacrifice involving the bodily feelings that are experienced during the Festival in terms of the hardship, fatigue and trouble encountered during their journey. The sacrifice can also influence the mental state, through liminality and transformation, of the participants. Liminality is an escape which occurs when an individual leaves his/her normal life, including his/her social class, behind to be on the same pedestal as all the other participants (Turner 1974). In effect, performing core religious actions can potentially influence and/or reinforce an individual's disposition, identity and religious belief. Additionally, by undertaking core religious actions, an individual has the opportunity to learn, inculcate and enhance religious values and display knowledge.

4.2.5 Fostering social and religious identity

The theme, ‘fostering social and religious identity’, emerged from the analyses of the interviews of the RAs on the significance of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri for the local Hindu community. Within this theme, sharing and learning experiences were also included. The Festival has social connotations in that participants have the opportunity to meet and interact with others. Therefore, the Festival helps participants to build or strengthen ties with friends, family members or new acquaintances. Of the eight RAs, six representatives contributed to the content of this theme. Quotations from five representatives of the organisations, two ‘on-site’ religious authorities and three ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisations, are presented in Box 4.4 below.

Box 4.4: Quotations from the RAs representing the theme ‘fostering social and religious identity’

ORA1	“...for the Festival all organisations and communities participate , not only the Hindu community: it is throughout (many Mauritians of all communities). We have people from abroad [Hindu diaspora] and tourists also participate .”
ORA3	“...there are also non-Hindus who participate ...they also go with the big flow...go there [Ganga Talao]...There is no distinction. There are many who do what we call “sewa”, give food, fruits and there are many Hindus who also bring their contributions in this way...There are some [non-Hindus] who cannot give juice and fruits on the road, but they are giving money as a contribution. But that too is a way of contribution. ”
ORO1	“For the Hindu community, it brings a moral at home that I do not need to live for myself, I need to live for my family, the community in my area and for my country. I need to have something to give others. I do not need to be selfish, similarly to when Lord Shiva made a sacrifice for others to live. This is the message of the Festival: live for others.”
ORO4	“...we believe that work is worship, so our people, our friends who are there, they spend most of the time serving, they say this is their prayer to offer some food to the participants who walk and are tired and hungry. And our motto is: service to man is service to God...Hindu religion believes in “Vasudevakutumbakam” meaning the world is one family. And with these values, they do their work and believe that world brotherhood will prevail and world peace will prevail if everybody starts thinking in this way and acting this way. ”
ORO5	“In social terms, when all these people converge, they talk, converse and make friends. Man is a social animal and they share. When we see on the roads, how people from all communities are sharing food, fruits, water, etc., this shows the social side, this sharing aspect is present in each one of us. ”

The Festival is celebrated by both Hindus and non-Hindus according to ORA1 and ORA3. ORA1 also pointed out that besides local Hindus and non-Hindus, tourists also take part in the Festival. This shows that the Festival widens the opportunity for the local Hindu participants to build or strengthen ties with others. During the interaction, the local Hindu participants are able not only to share ideas but also to develop and establish relationships. As such, the Festival may help to establish social attachment between the local Hindu community and other communities in Mauritius.

Another outcome of the social gathering is that it creates an opportunity for personal growth and development whereby participants, Hindus and non-Hindus, learn to be tolerant towards other

communities. Non-Hindus were seen to have participated either by taking part in the walk, donating food or drink along the way to Ganga Talao, or even providing financial contributions to organisations during the Festival (ORA3). The motto of the Festival for the local Hindu community is to ‘live for others’, as noted by ORO1. In other words, one should not be selfish and think only about oneself but also think about all those around us, namely our family, friends and others living in our community and country. This is to follow a similar example set by Lord Shiva when he drank poison to save humanity. ORO4 furthered this by adding that the Hindu community believes that “*the world is one family*”. As such, the Festival enables the local Hindu community to inculcate and foster a belief of ‘oneness’.

The social aspect is inevitable during the Festival as “*Man is a social animal*” (ORO5). It can be said that if there are a huge number of people going to the sacred lake, they are bound to meet and talk to new and old friends and this encompasses the social aspect of the Festival. Hence, the opportunity for social gathering triggers social experiences and this in turn can reinforce unity among participants such as family members, friends and the community at large.

4.3 THE VIEWS OF THE MAURITIAN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES ON THE CORE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OF THE LOCAL HINDU PARTICIPANTS

4.3.1 Background

The representatives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) were asked about what their organisations considered to be the overall *core religious experiences* for the local Hindus who participate in the Festival. As explained earlier (see Section 2.6.5), the *core religious experiences* refer to the main religious benefits/outcomes the participants gain/seek to gain through their participation in the Festival. Figure 4.2 illustrates the four themes that arose from the analyses of eight interviews with the RAs. These themes emerged from the analyses of the experiences offered during the four component parts of the Festival: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja.



Figure 4.2: The four themes relating to the overall *core religious experiences*

4.3.2 Self-purification

The theme ‘self-purification’ relates to the purification of one’s body and mind that takes place through voluntary austerities during the Festival. The theme emerged in only two components of the Festival and was related by seven representatives of the RAs. The responses of three RAs, one ‘on-site’ religious authority and two ‘off-site’ ‘religious-cultural organisations, are provided in Box 4.5.

Box 4.5: Quotations from the RAs representing the theme ‘self-purification’

<i>The preparation</i>	
ORA3	“...he [the local participant] will start fasting . He will give more time for his prayers to Shivji [Lord Shiva]... first they observe celibacy and second they will not eat meat and fish and so on...the family observe certain discipline ”.
ORO4	“Before travelling on foot, the participants start observing their fast . Those who have the habit of smoking, refrain from smoking . Those who have the habit of drinking, alcoholic drinks, they’ll refrain from that . The cleansing process starts when they start their preparation one month, two months before ...they go and take that mind-set and after that it’s good to maintain that mind-set but sometime they relapse, they relapse and they negate ...Once cleansing is done in your mind, they’ll act good, they’ll do good ...”
<i>The journey to and from Ganga Talao on foot</i>	
ORA3	“The walk is three days in principle . This means some leave one corner of the country to go to Ganga Talao and return: 3 days to and fro and 4th day is the Maha Shivaratri...This brings... a spirit of sacrifice . When we are walking for 3 days, we are sleeping outside from our house we are in the rain, we are under the sun ...So this makes a penance in itself ...Something that often happens is it rains...Those youngsters who are going...if it rains, they are wet, if it is sunny, they are under the sun ...the pain and difficulties they are facing become secondary .”
ORO3	“Sacrifice...from preparation until the end...when a participant who walks goes through this sacrifice ...he feels the happiness and joy in his heart, he feels lightness in his heart . He says “it took me a month for my contribution to this pilgrimage to succeed”.”

For the preparation, the participants were seen to fast, observe celibacy, abstain from smoking and drinking alcohol, and worship Lord Shiva more frequently (ORA3 and ORO4). More specifically, the importance of fasting was mentioned by ORA3. Fasting for a participant of the Hindu faith is a dogma based on moral convictions and disciplines undertaken during religious ceremonies. For instance, fasting was seen as a means of forgoing some types of everyday activities or necessities. It is fairly subjective. Fasting, according to ORA3, includes refraining from consuming non-vegetarian food such as seafood and meat. The definition of fasting extends to include the process of purification whereby a participant escapes his/her daily and regular habits by observing celibacy (ORA3) and avoiding alcohol and smoking are part of the cleansing process for the Festival (ORO4). Fasting, as part of the preparation, was seen as both a mental and a physical process for the participants who have the opportunity to refrain and abstain from normal practices and habits in exchange of feeling cleansed for their well-being. While the physical effect is the strains being put on one’s body, the mental effect is the participant’s religious commitment and loyalty towards his/her religion. The voluntary austerities undertaken during the preparation represent the participants’ devotion to Lord Shiva. It is a form of self-control and self-discipline for them to feel

spiritually, mentally and physically purified. During the preparation, the participants also spend more time worshipping Lord Shiva (ORA3). As a result, they have the opportunity to renew their faith and belief and demonstrate their religious and social identity. They are able to immerse themselves in the Hindu religious system and such feelings contribute to their overall *core religious experiences*.

For the journey to and from Ganga Talao, some participants walk (ORA3 and ORO3). Walking is another form of austerity and is a means to purify and cleanse oneself. The duration of the walk, the weather conditions, e.g. rainy and sunny, and the adjustment to the new environment, for instance sleeping outside, contribute to the participant's spirit of sacrifice (ORA3). The hardship, fatigue, pain and difficulties, and the challenges a participant endures throughout the walk show their religious commitment towards their religion. ORO3 went one step further than ORA3 by stating that participants make sacrifices in all the components of the Festival. The deep involvement of participants for the Festival allows them to experience flow where they gain intense 'religious' pleasure. For example, participants feel happiness and joy (ORO3). This indicates that the journey on foot makes participants undergo pleasant emotions, hedonic wellbeing. ORO3 also indicated that the walk helped participants to feel lightness in their hearts. In effect, such feelings may be a result of being purified and being freed from sins. As a result, these feelings contribute to the overall *core religious experiences* of the participants.

4.3.3 Closeness and connectedness to God

The theme 'closeness and connectedness to God' is a subjective feeling whereby an individual feels a sense of union with the Supreme Being. This feeling is a personal outcome from participating in the Festival. It is a mental process capable of causing a psychological change for the participants. This theme emerged from the data analyses of six interviews. The views of the representatives are expressed in Box 4.6.

Box 4.6: Quotations from the RAs relating to the theme 'closeness and connectedness to God'

<i>The journey to and from Ganga Talao</i>	
ORA2	"...they are merged with the Almighty...people feel it, they have the vibration: the vibration means you are merged with your mind through songs, through practicing the role of a participant who walk, the role of the devotee, so you have lots of positive energy renewed and all the negative energies are defeated."
ORO1	"...when someone is praying there are things that help him to get deeper in his meditation. The bhajans [religious songs], the words in the songs, drive them spiritually. Yes these are core religious experiences."
ORO5	"...everyone does not see spirituality or religiousness from the same point of view. This depends on the family background, education and also on the formation they receive in their home and from their gurus."

Box 4.6 (continued): Quotations from the RAs relating to the theme ‘closeness and connectedness to God’

<i>The visit to Ganga Talao</i>	
ORA1	“When participants who walk reach Ganga Talao, they go to the lake to collect the sacred water which they will bring to their place of residence and thereafter they use the water for the Char Pahar ki Pooja. But before leaving Ganga Talao with the water, they have to get the blessings of Lord Shiva and...in the temple...participants who walk...pours the holy water on the Shivling. At Ganga Talao...they visit nearly all the temples...and at the same time they listen to bhajans and Kirtans which the [organisation] prepares and organises for the participants who walk.”
ORA3	“Reaching Ganga Talao, they [participants who walk] collect the water and pray...The objective is not Ganga Talao...everybody goes to Ganges or Banaras in India to collect the water and offer it to Lord Shiva.”
ORO5	“But once there [Ganga Talao], we forget this sacrifice...It’s like we are one with the Supreme. It’s extraordinary, formidable what we feel once reaching at Grand Bassin.”
<i>The Char Pahar ki Pooja</i>	
ORA2	“We celebrate it [the Festival] in the homage of Lord Shiva through prayers; we are praying to all gods and goddesses...In a way, it is a contribution of the participants who walk through their prayers and the rituals for the wellbeing of human being, nature and beyond that...you are merged with the Almighty. Almighty is manifesting. Especially in this temple, we have lots of manifestations that you with your naked eye you can see, the presence of the Almighty, how he is manifesting...”
ORA3	“...they offer to Shiva all throughout the night during the 4 phases of 3 hours...there is what, water...First you do the abhishek, means you do the cleansing...through water of course, you use honey, you use clarified butter ghee, and evidently you use bel leaf, you use sugar and curd.”
ORO2	“...he [the participant who walk] will be complete...This is something personal...he feels the presence of Shiv, some even dreams...He closes his eyes and he sees a lot of things.”

The participants are able to experience ‘closeness and connectedness’ to Lord Shiva when taking part in the three components of the Festival, that is the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja, as noted by the representatives of the RAs. According to ORO5, ‘religious demographics’ influences the *core religious experiences*. The religious demographics are the religious foundation, characteristics and background of a person. This implies that the family background, level of education and teachings can potentially influence decisions on how to participate in the Festival, for example it can influence whether someone decides to walk or not, whether to attend the Char Pahar ki Pooja or not, and so on. Based on the level of knowledge, values and observance, every individual is bound to have different religious experiences as indicated by ORO5. This means that the principles instilled in a person has a bearing on his/her religious practices, level of commitment and feeling to be close to God, and so, is likely to influence his/her *core religious experiences*.

For the journey to and from Ganga Talao, participants who walk have the feeling of being merged with Lord Shiva (ORA2). Through such feelings, they are able to feel close and connected with the Supreme God leading them to experience vibration. Vibration in this context relates to the spiritual experiences of the participant being merged with God through songs, thereby renewing their positive energy, as identified by ORA2. This state of ‘closeness and connectedness’ to Lord Shiva

can therefore potentially enhance the existential religious experiences and evoke self-transcending experiences. The transcending experiences are those experiences which are beyond the limits of an ordinary experience that the individuals encounter, and which allows them to surpass themselves. For instance, the hymns to praise Lord Shiva and the prayers that someone carries out help them to attain a deep meditation state (ORO1). In essence, these religious activities allow the individual to feel immersed with the Supreme divinity.

During the visit to Ganga Talao, the participants are able to experience proximity to God once they set foot at the sacred site (ORO5). They also carry out religious activities/devotional practices such as collecting the sacred water, listening to religious songs and offering the collected water to and praying to Lord Shiva (ORA1 and ORA3). These devotional practices have symbolic significance for the participants. Whilst ORO5 focussed on the psychological effect the participant experience at the site, both ORA1 and ORA3 put emphasis on the physical activities they undertake at the site that trigger the religious experiences. In essence, both types of feelings give rise to extraordinary (positive and surprising) experiences. For instance, participants who walk have an extraordinary experience on reaching the sacred site in that, although they must be tired from their journey on foot, they forget their pain and feel a sense of belonging to the sacred site and become immersed with their feeling of ‘closeness and connectedness’ to God. They are also able to show their religious commitment and loyalty to Lord Shiva and towards their religion.

For the Char Pahar ki Pooja, the prayers are carried out in four segments of three hours (ORA3) for a period of twelve hours starting from 18 00 to 06 00. During this final set of prayers at the conclusion of the Festival, participants perform rituals and the Shivling, the representation of Lord Shiva, is cleansed with sacred water, honey, ghee, sugar, curd and bel leaves (ORA3). In performing these physical activities, the participants have the opportunity to symbolically bath Lord Shiva and feel connected to him. Some witness manifestations and feel that they are merged with God (ORA2). Also, during the Char Pahar ki Pooja the participants, closing their eyes as part of the prayers, feel the presence of Lord Shiva or may even dream of Him (ORO2). Through their involvement in the prayers within the religious settings, the participants feel connected to Lord Shiva and as a result they can experience transcendence and have the opportunity to reconnect with their religious values, identity and belief system. As such, undertaking the prayers for the Char Pahar ki Pooja generate flow and numinous experiences that is part of the *core religious experience*.

4.3.4 Self-transformation

‘Self-transformation’ is a mental process whereby an individual is transformed or changed during or after a religious activity, thereby causing a psychological change in the individual. A psychological change refers to personal feelings and interpretations that influence a participant’s *core religious experiences*. The theme of ‘self-transformation’ emerged from the interviews of

seven representatives of the RAs. The quotations of six representatives relating to this theme can be found in Box 4.7.

Box 4.7: Quotations from the RAs relating to the theme ‘self-transformation’

The preparation	
ORA2	“They make all their preparations so they are not involved in negative things , or they are involved in positive things . So these are things that make people become good human beings ”
ORA3	“...at least once a year to think of Lord Shiva, the saviour of humankind...It is an occasion to feel uplifted : he/she is more confident in what he/she is... ”
ORO5	“...when the participants who walk] are fasting , they have their spiritual guide who is there, the priest of the region who is preaching etc. and at the same time, it is a way to learn religious values .”
The journey to and from Ganga Talao	
ORA3	“I think that it is a great experience that for example someone is walking to go there, he gains a lot of experience of how people are receiving him and when someone is receiving him, in what way he is receiving him, what type of parda (sweet food being offered to him) he is giving him...So, all this is an experience in his life...So when he sees all this, he makes his mind that he too will try to make such a sacrifice . He will say that ‘in return, when I have the occasion, I will also give a similar service, maybe I will give a better facility that was provided by this person’...When he is walking to go there [Ganga Talao], he gains a lot of experience...it soothes his mind. It opens... all his life, throughout the year, he will think what happened to him at that place, what happened to him at that place”
The visit to Ganga Talao	
ORO2	“...when the person enters the 400m, before reaching Grand Bassin, he will definitely change ...even his mind changes . But it cannot be explained, one needs to go through it to feel it ...Then when the person enters Grand Bassin, he goes into it, and the one coming after him also goes through it.”
ORO3	“You hear the religious music, people praying, bells ringing...this gives you a different sensation, this sensation is what transform us for the 5 to 6 days .”
The Festival	
ORO4	“...everybody has a problem in their life... so many people will go to temple, go to church, they go to mosque, they go and plead in front of god, that please solve this, resolve this problem from their life. So when you go or you start thinking of going there [Ganga Talao], say you are going on foot, some are going by other means of transport. The moment they start thinking about it, means that they have started self-educating themselves, guiding their minds towards that positiveness . So it starts from there, you go there and reach there, definitely there will be a change in yourself... ”

In relation to the preparation, ‘self-transformation’ refers to a positive involvement of participants to be better human beings (ORA2), a feeling of being uplifted and as a result becoming more confident (ORA3) or an opportunity to learn new religious values from the spiritual guides (ORO5). More specifically, ORO5 is of the view that being preached to by priests or receiving/listening to religious discourses help participants to learn religious values. In other words, preaching allows the participants to learn more about their religion and practices; it enhances their personal growth in terms of knowledge and understanding of their traditions, customs and values. In general, as part of the preparation, a participant was self-transformed through a new mind-set making him/her more inclined to behave well and do good things.

Self-transformation also occurs during the journey to and from Ganga Talao whereby participants who walk have ample time to see what is happening around them, learn from others' actions/activities and think about how they can provide the same facilities better if they were to provide the same in the future (ORA3). As such, participants who walk feel enriched by the experience gained along the way as they learn a lot about themselves, their ability to undertake tasks and challenges, and their religious commitment and values. This enrichment in turn influences their disposition and makes them experience transformation. In effect, when the participant encounters others and sees the good that is being done around him/her, he/she feels inspired to provide others in a better way. This is a transformation, which only occurs during this Festival through the presence of volunteers.

At the sacred site, 'self-transformation' occurs through a change in the participant's mind-set before he/she reaches the sacred site and continues at the site (ORO2) and through a feeling of different sensations triggered by the sounds from the site. These take the form of religious music and songs being played, prayers being sung and bells being rung (ORO3). ORO3 further added that this sensation is felt for up to six days.

ORO4 gave a more general view of the Festival in terms of the deep and intense involvement and sense of accomplishment of participants from participating in the Festival. From the preparatory stage to the end of the Char Pahar ki Pooja participants have flow experiences. Nearing the end of the Festival, during the Char Pahar ki Pooja, these participants experience self-transformation by feeling close and connected to God. Self-transformation therefore provides those attending the all-night prayers with an occasion to better themselves by enhancing their knowledge and experience or by guiding their mind to think or do positive during the Char Pahar ki Pooja and beyond. As such, self-transformation not only provides participants with positive emotions during the prayers but also brings about a change in the individual's personal growth and development. During the prayers, participants also have the opportunity to reconnect with their values, identity, faith and belief. Hence, 'self-transformation' was seen as a key theme of the overall *core religious experiences*.

4.3.5 Self-actualisation

'Self-actualisation' is a mental process causing a psychological change in the participant. This allows the participant to feel fulfilled or enriched when he/she achieved something, either in terms of being satisfied or accomplishing his/her personal religious goal(s) through his/her involvement in the Festival. This theme emerged from the analyses of six out of eight interviews as part of three components of the Festival, specifically for the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja. The views of the RAs relating to this theme are given in Box 4.8.

Box 4.8: Quotations from the RAs representing the theme ‘self-actualisation’

The journey to and from Ganga Talao	
ORO1	“... participants who walk are satisfied that they have succeeded in their walk and prayers in good conditions.”
ORO2	“...it’s not written that people should walk, but this depends on the person, on the sacrifice he is doing. But if someone is doing everything good, he is going to and fro in his transport, it has no effect. But when he goes walking, it’s something else. It depends on the physique of the person. But this does not have an effect on someone going by any means of transport...at the material side of things, the roads may be congested for 7 hours. When the roads are congested for 7 hours, he says he should have gone by walking. The one in the car may think that there are so many people walking and here I am in the car. He has that feeling. But the more he sees people walking, the more he is interested, even if he is in the car, he is interested to reach his goal.”
ORO3	“...we are satisfied religiously, with all the sacrifice we made and all the sacrifice participants who walk made. We are doing ours. The participants walk as a sign of sacrifice from Cap-Malheureux. This sacrifice is important. Religiously satisfied is where...they made their sacrifice, they attained their religious and spiritual goals.”
ORO5	“The pleasure and the satisfaction that they feel may be difficult to relate because everyone does not see spirituality or religiousness from the same angle...they have sacrificed to and from Grand Bassin...It’s like when I go there, I got rid of my shortcomings and when I return, it is like a rebirth for the good of the family, a rebirth for the good of the society, a rebirth for the whole world...this renewal of ourselves for the benefit of the family, society, country, the whole world...it is a formidable experience, an extraordinary experience.”
The visit to Ganga Talao	
ORA3	“...the vibration at Ganga Talao from day 1 when people start walking for at least a week...it also contributes to the individual’s enrichment, and to his benefit. When he has walked for 2 days to reach there [at Ganga Talao] in 1 ½ day or 2 days, he reaches halfway in his journey before his return.”
ORO5	“But once there [Ganga Talao], we forget this sacrifice...We feel our desire being fulfilled by leaving the village and reaching Pari Talao [Ganga Talao]. It is a formidable experience.”
The Char Pahar ki Pooja	
ORA2	“...the core experience they have...very often they see miracles happening in this temple, people do have lots of vibrations... they feel achieved...”
ORA3	“...especially at night, we dedicate ourselves to the prayers of Lord Shiva...This is the achievement of all this preparation since 15 days, since 1 month...But the material part cleansing also means you are, at the same time, in your mind, doing some cleaning...this is the achievement, the participation through the 4 stages of 3 hrs [referring to the Char Pahar ki Pooja] and it brings us closer and brings us to do what we have to do vis-à-vis Shiva for what he did for humanity.”
ORO5	“They want to discover this force through the Pooja [prayers]. In the scriptures, it is said that a Hindu has 4 courses of life: Dharma [Righteousness], Arth, Kaam, Moksha [liberation]. So the first pahar...confers to Dharma, the second confers to material happiness and prosperity, the third pahar...confers to happiness in the married couple’s life, the fourth pahar...is the last stage of life. So anyone who participates in these four poojas [prayers], enjoys the 4 courses of life...a life of a Hindu inspires the moksha [liberation].”

For the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the participants who walk may achieve self-actualisation firstly by being satisfied when they complete the walk and prayers (ORO1), secondly by being satisfied to have attained their religious and spiritual goals (ORO3) and thirdly by having satisfaction and pleasure through the sacrifices undertaken during the journey to and from Ganga Talao (ORO5). For those who go to the sacred site by other means of transport, self-actualisation

occurs on one's accomplishment of reaching their destination, for instance ORO2 pointed out that these participants focus on reaching their goals. The goal here is to collect the sacred water, pray with it at Ganga Talao and bring it home. This demonstrates that the participants are able to feel accomplished once they reach their goal. ORO5 elaborated on it by saying that by going through it is like a rebirth or renewal for the participants who walk as they get rid of their shortcomings thereby benefitting themselves and everyone around them. The constituent self-actualisation was seen to be same for those travelling to and from the sacred site by foot and those travelling by other means to and from the site.

While at Ganga Talao, self-actualisation can also arise (ORO5 and ORA3). After the participants who walk have left their homes, carried out a sacrifice through the walk and finally reached the sacred site, they feel that their desires are fulfilled (ORO5). Once at the site, these participants undergo feelings of self-actualisation as they feel enriched by, and having benefited from, the positive feelings associated with the sacred site. Being at the site also means that they have accomplished the first half of their journey.

For the Char Pahar ki Pooja, the participants who walk feel vibrations in the temple and they feel a fulfilment in themselves, or more specifically they feel achieved (ORA2). ORO5 added that a participant is able to feel complete after the prayers end as these prayers inspire the four courses of a Hindu life: Dharma (righteousness), Artha (material happiness), Kama (family life) and Moksha (liberation from the life and death cycle). Also, the participants feel a sense of achievement at the end of these prayers, after having gone through all the previous components of the Festival which may have taken up to a month (ORA3). ORA3 also identified that there is a sense of achievement after the participants had attended the four prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja, which occurs over 12 hours at night. The prayers are a means for them to cleanse their body and mind.

Therefore the self-actualisation experiences, at each component of the Festival, can evoke ecstatic feelings which are part of the existential *core religious experiences*. Additionally, the deep and intense involvement and sense of accomplishment of participants for the Festival, starting from the preparation component through to the conclusion of the Char Pahar ki Pooja component, can also evoke flow and subjective experiences. By being involved in these prayers within the religious settings, the participants are able to feel immersed within the Hindu religious system and to experience self-renewal. These potentially influence their identity, disposition and belief and instigate transcendence and meaningful experiences.

4.4 THE AUGMENTED NATURE OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

4.4.1 Background

This section identifies what the RAs consider to be the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* offered through participation in the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival). By participating in the Festival, the participants are seen to have the opportunity to experience heightened emotions and religious experiences which may potentially reinforce their overall sense of attachment to the Festival and the sacred site. *The augmented religious experiences* arise as a result of the settings in which the participants find themselves: the (1) religious, (2) physical and (3) social settings. These act as catalysts that raise the level of the experience beyond that which can be experienced at other times.

4.4.2 The influence of the religious settings in augmenting the religious experiences

Within the religious settings, specific aspects/activities during the Festival elevate the normal religious experiences for the participants. Three constituents emerged from the analyses of the interviews relating to this theme as shown in Figure 4.3.



Figure 4.3: The influence of the religious settings in augmenting the religious experiences

4.4.2.1 *Deep involvement in the prayers*

The constituent ‘deep involvement in the prayers’ relates to the all-night long prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja. The augmentation of the religious experiences, from the unique and distinct prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja, as highlighted in Sections 1.2.3.2.4 and 4.3.3, arises when the participants are intensely involved in and carry out religious activities that they cannot experience during their normal everyday practices. Also, their profound involvement in these religious activities has psychological effects that contribute to the augmentations. This constituent emerged from the analyses of five of the eight RAs’ interviews. Their views are presented in Box 4.9.

Box 4.9: Quotations from the RAs relating to the constituent ‘deep involvement in the prayers’

ORA1	“...you have families from different corners of the island coming and participating in these sessions. They all wait for their moment...so you have got 10 families sitting to do the Char Pahar ki Pooja. They have to sit down together with the priest to do the prayers. Even those who are not in the front [closer to the Shivling] have to interact [take part] with the prayers because when it comes to the pouring of water, or giving fruits or giving flowers they have to do so at the same time...”
ORA2	“...the whole night they are fasting and praying Shiva: they are doing everything for Shiva...It is one of the greatest fasts, and...it is said in the sacred books, if you'll do this fast, you do not need to do any other fast the whole year. The fasting shows your purity, sincerity and devotion...You know the greatest experience that people have is the divine manifestation. Shiva manifests himself, what is the greatest experience beyond that...They [the participants] merge with Shiva, they experience, feel and see Shiva...in this temple during the ritual times.”
ORO1	“It is a unique prayer that takes place during a whole night; we call it Raat Jagran, [stay awake for one night]. It is an extraordinary experience to meditate, think about God all night long...So as offering...flowers and water as symbolical offerings...On the night of the Festival, when they do the Char Pahar ki Pooja, they do 4 times Abhishek and they pour the sacred water... bel leaf...Yes...take part in the Char Pahar ki Pooja with all the rituals, bhajans, kirtans. If you do not participate in the prayers for the Maha Shivaratri, you do not have the experience on any other day.”
ORO2	“To begin with, this is a great sacrifice...So for approximately 8 hours he [the participant] should sit...But he should sit in all 4 prayers to know what he has gained and what not. It cannot be explained, you should go through it together with the mantras (prayers)...when ghee is being poured on Shivling, it has its prayers. When honey is poured, it has another prayer. When milk is poured, it has another prayer. Everything that is being poured on the Shivling will have its own prayer. There is washing, wiping, putting on a garland, light fire, do aarty [prayer]...What one “sees” is dependant on that person. Someone may see something while others don't...He will feel, in his soul he will know that Shiv is here. This cannot be explained...you need the priests. And for this day the priest is not alone, he has his assistants. Then there are the materials for the pooja [prayer], like camphor, scented sticks, rice, milk, all these are important”
ORO4	“...people feel the proximity with God... they feel God is here... with them...I'm part of the big family and I am a purified person, I am doing my prayers...Like school children, we repeat certain things that we don't know. And it stays in our mind and until the end we do not forget it. So this is the experience. You repeat it...this fills in the mind... with goodness...and in your body and your way of thinking.”

In regard to the prayers, both ORA1 and ORA2 provided insights into its significance, the way it is carried out at the sacred site and how the religious experiences gained through the prayers differ from normal everyday religious practices. The other representatives also provided their organisation's views as to how the religious experiences offered by the Festival are heightened during the Char Pahar ki Pooja.

The significance of fasting and reasons for undertaking the prayers (ORA2), the use of religious items to perform the rituals (ORA1, ORO1 and ORO2) and the feeling of being closer to and immersed with Lord Shiva (ORO2 and ORO4) were considered to enhance the religious experiences for the participants. Throughout the night, participants are intensely and continuously involved in carrying out religious activities such as meditating, praying, singing, listening to religious songs, performing rituals, making offerings and pouring libations on the idol using ghee,

honey, milk and the sacred water collected at Ganga Talao (ORA1, ORO1 and ORO2). Camphor, scented sticks, garland, flowers, bel leaves, fruits, sugar and curd are also used to carry out the rituals (ORO1 and ORO2). Undertaking these physical activities are considered to contribute to the *core religious experiences* for the participants where they have the opportunity to feel ‘closeness and connectedness’ to Lord Shiva, as discussed in Section 4.3.3. In essence, the participants are at the service of Lord Shiva. They attend to the Shivling by washing and wiping it using the religious items and in doing so they are able to feel His presence (ORO2) or feel Him closer (ORO4). By feeling God’s presence, participants undergo transcendent experiences and they develop feelings that God is above everything. Such feelings cannot be experienced at any other time of the year: it can only be experienced once a year during the Char Pahar ki Pooja. These feelings are further enhanced as the participants feel they are alleviating Lord Shiva’s pain. Furthermore, they try to please Him by making offerings of the sacred water, flowers and bel leaves all of which have symbolic meanings to Lord Shiva (ORO1). On this special night, Lord Shiva may also manifest himself in the temple (ORA2). As a result, participants can experience mysticism thereby intensifying their belief on Him. Mystical experience (a sense of union with God) involves subjective experiences and interpretations evoking numinous feelings.

Also, participants feel purified (ORA2 and ORO4) as they fast (ORA2) and make sacrifices by staying awake and sitting for long hours (ORO1 and ORO2). The feeling of being purified was identified as a *core religious experience* in Section 4.3.2. These feelings have psychological effects on the participants. Fasting, as stated by ORA2, may be seen as a demonstration of sincerity and devotion for Lord Shiva. The religious experiences resulting from fasting is considered to be one of the greatest experiences one could undergo. The representative of ORA2 pointed out that if participants fast during this night for the prayers, they do not need to fast on any other occasion for the year. This particular fasting is unique and so powerful.

Participants are able to praise Lord Shiva and recite hymns. They all sit together in the temple (ORA1) to chant mantras. Being present in temple settings with like-minded participants and being deeply involved in religious practices, participants have the opportunity to accumulate enhanced religious experiences during the 12 hours. Engaging with others (ORA1) can also help participants to build rapport or reinforce ties with acquaintances or others. The participants are able to exhibit their pride and oneness with their Hindu faith thereby demonstrating a greater sense of community and loyalty for their religion. As a result, the participants evoke pleasant emotions, hedonic in nature, which escalate their religious experiences for the Festival.

The deep involvement of the participants in the religious activities, throughout the night, creates intense and flow experiences that augment their religious experiences. The flow experience is an extraordinary feeling acquired through the profound involvement of the participants thereby achieving intense bliss which they may not encounter in their normal religious practices. This all-night dedication demonstrates the participants’ religious commitment, loyalty and sincerity with

their belief system and this influences their choices and behaviour and social ethos as part of the Char Pahar ki Pooja.

4.4.2.2 Making a personal sacrifice

The constituent ‘making a personal sacrifice’ relates to the expression of bodily feelings which are informed by the hardship, fatigue, pain, difficulties and challenges that a participant endures for the Festival. Of the eight RAs, four representatives shared their organisations’ views as given in Box 4.10.

Box 4.10: Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent ‘making a personal sacrifice’

ORA3	“...he [the participant] gains a lot of experience, through the type of place he is sleeping or staying...with the amount of people who go, someone cannot give him a bed, mattress for him to sleep well, or a room, no. They are going, they are staying in the hall, sleeping on a chatai [mat placed on floor], some are putting plastic down to sleep. And at times they do not have a proper toilet; sometimes they do not have proper water to bath. So, all this is an experience in their lives ...At times when someone goes, a car hits him, there is accident, he is hurt. All this...the participant sees what happens, what not. This means it is an experience when he walks: he gains a lot of ideas in his life...So all this is something...He must do all these sacrifices, he must sit under a tree or he sits in a baitka (Hindu hall), in a mandir (temple). All this is shown on the streets, how you should live, how you should go, how you should do sacrifice, how you should stay clean...So all these are developments which, when he is walking to go there, he gets as experience...he [the participant] will do it over 3 days, this means its longer and his spirit of participation and his spirit of sacrifice will also be extended...”
ORO1	“...during the walk, the more you sacrifice it looks like you are closer to God. For example, people can bring the water in car or bus but some choose to walk, starting from wherever, to get the water... [Is the sacrifice during the walk a very important aspect during the festival...?] Yes it is a very important aspect...the Festival involves taking part in a walk [for those walking] to fetch the water...the experience cannot be gained on any other day. There is a sense of sacrifice in collecting the water and this gives an exceptional significance to the water...”
ORO3	“...they are carrying their Kanwars from the North, South, East and West to Ganga Talao, walking with penance through the heat, cold, night and day. The beauty is here when they attained their goal by reaching home after all the sacrifices they made and the tiredness they have. [You told me night-day-cold-heat etc. are these factors important?] Yes very important, very important...”
ORO4	“... it's self penance. Those who are exerting their entire body starting from the toe to top, they [as individuals or as a group] are carrying the Kanwar on their shoulders. And their physical change, the pain sometimes they get in their legs, make them concentrate upon their body, what body God has given them and God helps to maintain this. I am doing my penance because I want God to help me in my life.”

Participants who walk make personal sacrifices for the Festival. The outcome from this physical act is that participants feel purified; this was identified as contributing to *the core religious experiences* for the participants (see Section 4.3.2). The walk to and/or from the sacred site is unique in itself as it is done once a year by the local Hindu participants for the Festival. These participants were seen to have ‘augmented’ religious experiences (ORA3, ORO1, ORO3 and ORO4).

Participants, who walk, sacrifice themselves by adapting to new situations along their journey such as sleeping on mats and plastic, not having proper toilet and bathing facilities and walking on dangerous roads (ORA3). The walk can be both a physical and mental experience for them. By making a personal sacrifice, a participant is able to not only discover himself/herself by knowing his/her bodily limits of staying outside the comforts of the home but also acquire personal meaningful experiences along the way that enhance his/her religious values, commitment, belief and knowledge. The duration of the walk, for instance walking for three days, indicates that the participant has to undergo sacrifices for a given period of time. This is a cumulative feeling that elevates the existential religious experiences of those walking for days. Although waiting in traffic is strenuous, walking requires the participants to exert all parts of their bodies, and as some participants carry Kanwars, these make the journey more exhausting (ORO4). In essence, the pain, hardship and troubles can be excruciating, triggering a change in the participants where they are able to discover their bodily limits, to learn more about their bodies and to acquire more knowledge about themselves. As a result, these participants undergo self-transformation (see Section 4.3.4). A participant who travels on foot undergoes a psychological change during the journey to and from Ganga Talao (ORA3 and ORO2) as well as at the sacred place (ORO3). More specifically, ORA3 explained that each participant gains intense experiences along the way when he/she sees how others are behaving and he/she learns a lot from those experiences. These personal experiences often trigger ecstatic feelings and influence an individual's disposition, identity and belief system as well as his/her religious experiences along the way to the sacred site.

The personal sacrifice was undertaken for the purpose of collecting the sacred water from Ganga Talao (ORO1). For those who walk, the sacrifice is a means to enhance the emotional and religious values of the sacred water. This experience and the ecstatic feelings are thought to be gained only through the participation in the Festival alongside many other participants who walk, and not on any other day when the individual goes to Ganga Talao using a means of transport. The more these participants sacrifice themselves the closer they get to God (ORO1). Going through the hardship for their belief over a period of time while also focusing on Lord Shiva may also evoke flow experiences.

The Festival provides the participants with the opportunity to show respect and pay homage to Lord Shiva by making a personal sacrifice as Lord Shiva did by drinking the poison to save the whole of humanity. This sacrifice allow them to feel 'closeness and connectedness' to Lord Shiva (see Section 4.3.3) and reinforces their disposition, (self and social) identity and belief towards the Hindu religion. Therefore by undertaking a long and hard sacrifice, participants are able to show heightened commitments through their ability to endure sacrifice, pain and penance. In doing so, they gain augmented religious experiences during the walk.

4.4.2.3 Freed from social barriers

The constituent ‘freed from social barriers’ is a unique feeling when the participants no longer hold their status (based on their social class, level of education, job title, and so on) as the one they held before. Of the eight RAs, four representatives shared their views on this topic in Box 4.11.

Box 4.11: Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent ‘freed from social barriers’

<i>The journey to and from Ganga Talao</i>	
ORA2	“...because they are leaving their jobs, they are leaving their homes, they are leaving their cars, they are walking. They are coming over here because they are merged with the Almighty.”
ORO1	“...during this walk, all types of people take part. Someone can be a superintendent of police, doctor, labourer, student, housewife, unemployed or an educated/non-educated person. All these people are going in a group for the walk...This walk does not make a distinction between high and low (social class), male or female (gender), rich or poor (status), educated or non-educated (education level): there is no difference...no matter of your social class.”
<i>The visit to Ganga Talao</i>	
ORA1	“...there is no difference between the rich and the poor...and they are all like...one family...”
ORA3	“Already he has reached a goal so as to collect the sacred water...evidently with everyone here, we give ourselves a different feeling from the daily.”
<i>The Char Pahar ki Pooja</i>	
ORO1	Someone can be an entrepreneur, someone can be rich, someone can come in a BMW or someone can come by walking, but we are all sitting down together on the mat to pray together...”

The constituent ‘freed from social barriers’ emerged during (1) the journey to and from Ganga Talao (ORA2 and ORO1), (2) the visit to Ganga Talao (ORA1 and ORA3) and (3) the Char Pahar ki Pooja (ORO1). The feeling of ‘being freed from social barriers’ has a psychological effect on the participants. For the journey to and from Ganga Talao, participants who walk and those travelling by any other means free themselves from their normal daily life and set off for a religious goal of collecting the sacred water. As part of the journey, they forgo their differences in terms of social and economic status (ORA2 and ORO1). Adding to this, ORO1 stated that when the participants join together to form a group for the walk, they become equals meaning that they forgo their status and they consider themselves to be on the same pedestal as others.

Once at the sacred site, as ORA3 stated, the participants are capable of having a unique feeling unlike those experienced in their daily lives, focusing on Lord Shiva and the religious activities they are meant to carry out. These unique feelings and experiences can only be gained alongside other like-minded participants who are sharing similar values, purposes and interests while ignoring social class. Therefore, they undergo liminal experiences where they escape from their normal life and seek novel experiences. In essence, they also undergo psychological changes evoking transformational experiences. Overall, experiencing liminality, self-transformation and closeness to

Lord Shiva, trigger heightened positive emotions for the participants thereby giving rise to ‘augmented’ religious experiences.

4.4.3 The influence of the physical settings in augmenting the religious experiences

The interaction with the physical environment activates sensory stimuli which elicits and influences emotions, resulting in meaningful experiences. The physical settings can act as a catalyst in augmenting religious experiences. The contribution of the physical settings to the augmented experiences is embedded in three constituents namely ‘festival settings’, ‘atmosphere’ and ‘place dependence and attachment’, as shown in Figure 4.4.

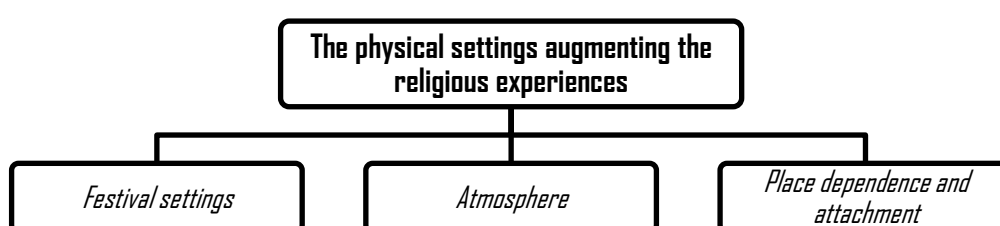


Figure 4.4: The influence of the physical settings in augmenting the religious experiences

4.4.3.1 Festival settings

Festival settings are the tangible physical facilities available to the participants. Of the eight RAs, four representatives (ORA1, ORA3, ORO1 and ORO4) explained the views of their organisations about the journey to and from Ganga Talao and at the sacred site as seen in Box 4.12.

Box 4.12: Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent ‘festival settings’

Settings on the way to and from Ganga Talao	
ORA1	“Here when you come to Maha Shivaratri [referring to Ganga Talao] you have traffic jam, you get thousands and thousands of participants walking in the street, thousands of cars going to Ganga Talao, there is a one way traffic going to and at GT which does not happen outside Maha Shivaratri. ”
ORA3	“But if we take the last 50 years- 60 years till now, there have been considerable changes. Long ago, to reach Ganga Talao, it was a journey of difficulties. There were no roads, there were agricultural lands and when it rained, it became a muddy land. To reach there to collect water, it [Ganga Talao] was in its natural form with all its difficulties. Today, the government has contributed to facilitate people’s access and there are now infrastructures... the difficult roads have been ameliorated so as to facilitate people’s access. And there have also been many infrastructures for example parking and road for those who come by cars... So, all these contribute to an internal moment for the difficulties, and when they go there they get...40-50 km...and at the same time he does not need to go look for facilities, there are many facilities which he can access free of charge. And this poses less constraint to the individual.”
ORO4	“I have mentioned that the Task force takes care of all the infrastructure of road along which the participants walk. They will cover the potholes if there are any...”

Box 4.12 (continued): Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent ‘festival settings’

Settings at Ganga Talao	
ORA1	“...when they [participants who walk] come to Ganga Talao, they are not there for only 5 minutes, they are there for nearly half a day, taking rest if they have to walk long distance and they visit nearly all the temples at Ganga Talao and at the same time they listen to bhajans and Kirtans...come at the Ganga Talao to do the Char Pahar ki Pooja ...We have constructed our temple; we have enlarged our temple nearly by 50 times, now it's around 5000 sq. feet, to cater for the increasing number of participants who walk coming to Ganga Talao to pour the holy water on the Shivling. And it is the only temple at Ganga Talao which can receive 200/300 participants who walk at one moment”
ORO1	“...as a stakeholder with the Government, we must be proud that we have managed to preserve the religious aspects of Ganga Talao that make them feel the place is special and have the presence of God...and they [the participants who walk] have got all the necessary facilities to pray and to meditate without being disturbed by something.”
ORO4	“...there is the small hill they have placed a statue of Shri Hanumanji, the people will go and pray, and they walk along the steps to the end of the hill and they come back.”

The ‘festival settings’ on the way to and from Ganga Talao, were commented on by three representatives (ORA1, ORA3 and ORO4). Over the years, there have been considerable changes in terms of roads and parking at the site, and these changes are seen in a positive way as they facilitate access to the sacred site (ORA3). Additionally, amenities such as transport, toilet, tents and police, and infrastructural facilities such as good roads, were seen as important parts of the physical environment benefitting participants. Better roads mean that the journey of the participants who walk have been made easier over time. Bigger and better roads have also facilitated the carrying of bigger Kanwars; this being a variation from the traditional small Kanwars. With the facilities and amenities in place, the participants are likely to be positively influenced as they can focus only on the journey with no worries about potholes in the roads or any amenities they may need on the way to and from Ganga Talao. All three organisations agreed that the constituent ‘festival settings’, which have become better over the years, augments the participants’ religious experiences along the way to and from Ganga Talao for the Festival.

Despite the festival settings in place, ORA1, ORA3 and ORO4 raised the issue of the ease of accessibility. Traffic has, for some years, been a concern especially for those going by a means of road transport to Ganga Talao. The traffic jams are a problem for other people going to work, including those from other communities, as they can be stuck for hours on the roads. If the traffic is properly managed, this may potentially lead to a more positive evaluation of the personal experiences, thereby enhancing the quality of the religious experiences for participants, including those who walk and those travelling by other means, during the Festival amounting to ‘augmented’ religious experiences.

At the site, the focus of the three representatives (ORA1, ORO1 and ORO4) was on what the site offers to participants and the effects on their behavioural commitment at Ganga Talao. The sacred

site is a place where the participants not only come to visit temples, pray and listen to devotional songs “bhajans and kirtans” as a means of practicing their religion during the visit at the site and/or during the Char Pahar ki Pooja but also to rest after a tiring walk ranging from five minutes to almost half a day (ORA1). ORA1 added that there are many temples at the sacred site, all of which the participants who walk tended to visit. With an increased number of participants, the temples have also been enlarged to cater for the needs of the participants to be able to pour the holy water on the Shivling. In addition, there is a need to help participants tired from the walk or from being held in traffic for a long time. A positive experience at the sacred site can therefore positively influence their meanings, overall perceived image and emotional attachment and have a bearing on their future behaviours. As a consequence, the settings at the site can augment the participants’ religious experiences at the site.

In addition to the temples having been enlarged, other structures have been added at Ganga Talao, for example the temple of Hanumanji placed on the top of the hill and the steps leading to it (ORO4). Further additions include shrines, steps around the lake to reach the sacred lake, road enlargements, a 108-foot giant statue of Lord Shiva, electrical and water facilities, more parking sites, etc., to accommodate the high influx of participants to the site. These structures in effect help participants by relieving them of their worries of, for example, where they can park, how they can reach the sacred lake, where they can pray and so on. Despite these additions, ORO1 claimed that the religious aspects at the sacred site are still present, thereby making someone at the site feel that the place is special or even sensing the presence of God. As a consequence, the settings at the site help to enhance the emotional/affective and cultural bonds and feeling of belonging that are developed between the local Hindus and the physical environment of the site. In effect the physical aspects of the site can strengthen the participants’ disposition, identity and religious commitment thereby augmenting their religious experiences during the Festival.

4.4.3.2 *Atmosphere*

Atmosphere is part of the physical intangible environment including the ‘aesthetic’ attributes which influence the sensory experiences of a participant. These participants, being immersed and absorbed with the intangible properties of the environment, may encounter intense and unique meaningful experiences. Six of the eight RAs shared their responses for the Festival in general, for the journey to and from Ganga Talao and for the visit to Ganga Talao as can be seen in Box 4.13.

Box 4.13: Quotations from the RAs about the constituent ‘atmosphere’

The Festival	
ORA1	“...everyone coming to Ganga Talao during the Maha Shivaratri festival which you won't get it every day...the Maha Shivaratri festival which is done in Mauritius is totally different from other places...they will not be coming here to do Diwali festival but Maha Shivaratri is different, you get all mixture of people. The amount of what you call ambiance that you get in the Maha Shivaratri, you do not get it [otherwise]. And also it is the festival which is carried over 2 weeks; day and night.”
The journey to and from Ganga Talao	
ORO3	“... when you pass on all the temples and ring the bells.”
ORO4	“When you go towards [Ganga Talao], you see live music going on, some people stand up, stand for a while, listen and take inspiration. Some people play instruments, musical instruments they walk. All this I think is the contribution.”
ORO5	“It is because it is another world. As soon as you get into your car you start driving, you hear music, you see structures – Kanwar - people wearing nearly the same clothes, bhajans and kirtans, food being served around, sound from drum-like instruments: dholok (1-side drum), tamboor (2-side drum), jaal (sembal). This altogether makes the walk very specific. Although we do not see it in India. It is not same. For Mauritius, it is something very specific...Well, when we talk the physical element once more, you see the devotee dance, sing, they clap. This is the physical again which is involved. Singing and dancing, clapping hands, shouting ‘Har Har Mahadev’ (praise Lord shiva) etc., is a physical element which connects to the element of spirituality.”
The visit to Ganga Talao	
ORA3	“Pray in an environment, an atmosphere which reigns at Grand Bassin, whether it is during the day or at night. More during the night, everything there is “the songs, bells, chanting of mantras...This makes a non-physical, extra-terrestrial atmosphere, more heavenly. This is unique when we are taking the water, there are about 200 people lighting their lamps, the sight of it. When people are singing their prayers, you hear the hymn of it. When the atmosphere all around is bombarded [reference to the smoke], it contributes again.”
ORO1	“...the prayers and mantras said by priests accompanied by the rhythm by the bells and ‘conch’ all these make the participants happy.”
ORO4	“When you enter the temple for your abhishek, the cool breeze is coming and guiding towards your face and you feel something is happening. So that coolness, that change, that feeling, all... everything bring towards religious feelings”

Except for ORA1, all the representatives indicated that ‘soundscape’ was a main part of the atmosphere at the sacred site. While ORO4 and ORO5 mentioned soundscape along the way to the sacred site, ORA3, ORO1 and ORO3 gave examples of how the soundscape augmented the religious experiences of participants at the sacred site. The experiences resulting from the different elements of the atmosphere have a psychological effect on an individual thereby contributing to ‘augmented’ religious experiences. Along the way to and from the site, it was seen that instruments and music are played as music is a source of inspiration for devotees (ORO4). ‘Soundscape’ also included sounds coming from singing, dancing, clapping and praising God by shouting his name (ORO5). The soundscape present along the way during the Festival makes up an atmosphere which is not present outside of the Festival. The exceptional soundscape that devotees hear along the way therefore, augments their religious experiences during their journey to and from the sacred site.

Soundscape at the sacred site is made up of songs, bells, chanting of mantras, kirtans and bhajans, sound made by the ‘conch’ (ORA3 and ORO1). All of these create a heavenly atmosphere during

the Festival (ORA3). When participants enter the temples at the site, they are therefore immersed in the soundscape and the atmosphere. The soundscape is a unique experience which is present in a distinctive manner at the site during the Festival. Once participants are immersed within the atmosphere, they co-create unique experiences, which are distinctive to their visit at the site during the Festival, leading to ecstatic feelings and religious fulfilment. As such, the soundscape adds value to the atmosphere, making it something extraordinary, i.e. something which the participants do not ordinarily experience in their daily life but only during the Festival at Ganga Talao. This extraordinary atmosphere therefore augments the participants' religious experiences at the site.

Ambiance was also identified as contributing to the atmosphere at Ganga Talao (ORA1) and along the way to and from the sacred site (ORO5). Ambiance relates to the mood, character and quality of a particular environment. The ambiance during the period of the Festival was identified as being different because of the large number of individuals participating compared to the participation rate for any other festival in Mauritius. The ambiance can be seen as a denomination of the atmosphere. The participants are so immersed in the ambiance at the sacred site that this influences their behaviours at, and attachment to, the site and this embodies their religious identities. The liminal space helps participants to unleash their emotions, which in turn, is believed to engender 'augmented' religious experiences. Also, as the way the Festival is celebrated is distinct from any other place where it is celebrated in the world, this makes the Festival unique. As put by ORO5, during the Festival the roads leading to the site are "*another world*" and so cannot be replicated elsewhere in the world. The ambiance along the road is made from a combination of a number of things, for instance the religious music being played on loudspeakers, instrumental music being played, bhajans and kirtans being sung, same clothes been worn by participants who walk with Kanwars and food being served by many volunteers along the way. This is a unique experience as it cannot be experienced at any other time of the year and anywhere else in the world in the same manner. The way the participants interact with the ambiance is through their senses (hearing, sight, smell, touch and taste); this is subjective as it depends on the personal understanding of their surroundings. By witnessing such an ambiance, participants are transformed through the positive vibe of the atmosphere which in turn influences their behaviours and their attachment to the Festival and their religion. Therefore, the ambiance augments the religious experiences of participants who walk as well as those travelling by any means to and from the site.

Lastly, climate is an important part of the atmosphere which influences the religious experiences of those participating in the Festival at Ganga Talao (ORO4). Being at the sacred site, during the prayers, participants are able to feel the cool breeze which makes them feel changed or transformed. The Festival falls during the period when it is rainy or even cyclonic. Therefore, the climatic conditions provide a specific atmosphere around the time of the Festival. Anyone, experiencing the Festival, will inevitably experience the climate, which is capable of influencing one's religious experience in a positive or negative manner. As such the climate can partake in potentially augmenting the religious experience of the participants at the sacred site.

4.4.3.3 Place dependence and attachment

Place dependence refers to the “physical characteristics of a place as central to attachment because it provides amenities or resources to support one’s goals” (Stokols and Shumaker 1981). In contrast, place attachment refers to the emotional ties or bonds of an individual with a sacred space based on his/her belief and commitments. This constituent includes the sacred artefacts and sacred water, which may be a psychological influence on the participants during the Festival and which are vital aspects of Ganga Talao and help participants to meet their goals, for example by collecting water and praying at Ganga Talao. Four RAs shared their views as shown in Box 4.14.

Box 4.14: Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent ‘place dependence and attachment’

Sacred artefacts	
ORA1	“We have erected a 108 feet Lord Shiva. Now, the Durga Maa is being erected. Miles before you reach the Ganga Talao you see these monumental statues where you know that now you are approaching as you see the statues from far away from the South, from Vacoas and from this itself you know you are approaching God’s abode.”
ORA2	“... physical elements is an influence... The greatest influence is Shiva himself... the greatest attraction is Shiva; the greatest energy is Shiva; the greatest logistic is Shiva. Because people are attracted not to all those things, people are attracted by Shiva only.”
ORO3	“... you are thrilled when you come in front of the Mangal Mahadev which is 108 ft...all the prayers you do in all the temples...the water is very sacred. There is an element in this water. Additional experiences are like we have put the Mangal Mahadev, we shall have the 108ft Durga Maa, and these have transformed the Ganga Talao and the Maha Shivaratri festival. With the Mangal Mahadev, we start our prayer 1 day before the start of Maha Shivaratri festival and today people have the enthusiasm to wait for these prayers to start. When we talk about transformation... today...every day when the tourists are making their booking, they say that they will go to Grand Bassin. Every Sunday, we have thousands of people converging to Grand Bassin. It means they have seen the spiritual aspect. They have seen the change. Everyone who comes, they want to see the statue. Additional which has transformed. Yes. Yes we have another temple which has been built. The temple which the Hindu House has constructed has also transformed the Grand Bassin.”
Sacred water	
ORA1	“Well it is important because one of the main religious items is that when you reach Ganga Talao you take the sacred water and...pour the sacred water on the Shivling...When participants who walk reach Ganga Talao, they go to the lake to take the sacred water which they will bring to their place of residence and thereafter they use the sacred water for Char Pahar ki Pooja...They take the water, they do their prayers in the evening and they stay over up to midnight because what they want to do is to pour the water early morning of the Maha Shivaratri day...Shiva is represented by the Shivling in the temple, the ...[ORA1] receives all the participants who walk in the Kashiviswanath temple for them to pour the holy water on the Shivling.”
ORA3	“We have to...collect the water, to offer to Shiva... we do this by knowledge that he swallowed poison, put it in his throat to save humanity. In knowledge of this, we give him the water as a cooling effect...And the root of walk is not here, but there, to collect so as to offer...sacred water.”

The ‘sacred artefacts’ are tangible and visual reminders that have religious connotation for a Hindu. From the analyses of the interviews, the views of three of eight RAs, two ‘on-site’ religious authorities and one ‘off-site’ religious-cultural organisation, were in line with this constituent. The

term 'sacred artefacts' covers the new temple and unique gigantic statues, such as the 108 feet statue of Mangal Mahadev, built at Ganga Talao (ORA1 and ORO3). The temple provides an individual space to pray or worship whereby he/she can reinforce his/her disposition, identity, faith and belief. In other words, a temple provides permanent services in the promotion of culture, traditions and (religious and social) identity.

The statues are representations of deities (ORA1), and they therefore carry symbolic meanings for the local Hindu participants. These novel structures therefore influence participants at the sacred site in a positive way by transforming them when they come in contact with the sacred artefacts. As such, the 'sacred artefacts' are considered to be the pull factor at the sacred site as participants have an emotional relationship with these, thereby leading to their attachment to the sacred site. The greatest pull at the site is Shiva himself (ORA2). Lord Shiva is venerated in the form of the Shivling; therefore, the Shivling at Ganga Talao is the sacred artefact pulling the participants. Although the representation of Lord Shiva is man-made, it has symbolic meanings for the locals, thereby creating an emotional relationship with the Shivling. These built-in objects, including the temples, statues and other representations of God, are 'aesthetic' features of Ganga Talao allowing participants to develop an 'aesthetic' image and extraordinary experiences. Participants are therefore able to derive meanings, fulfil their religious/spiritual development and be 'materially' bonded to the site. The meanings and emotions derived from these structures (physical aspects) trigger extended experiences through the senses and can lead to 'augmented' religious experiences. By experiencing the sacred structures, participants could not only develop cultural and historical bonds but also be emotionally attached to the site; these can in turn positively influence their behaviour and perception. Therefore, participants gain amplified experiences when they are in the presence of the 'sacred artefacts', thereby augmenting their religious experiences at the sacred site.

The significance of the sacred water at Ganga Talao was highlighted by two of the 'on-site' religious authorities, ORA1 and ORA3. While ORA1 elaborated on the use of the sacred water in prayers during the Char Pahar ki Pooja, i.e. in the evening, night and early morning of the Festival over a span of 12 hours, ORA3 pointed out the significance of the sacred water for the Festival. The constituent 'sacred water' was therefore an important factor influencing the religious experience of participants at Ganga Talao. In essence, the sacred water at Ganga Talao allows participants to undergo a flow experience in the sense that the participants have to travel to the site on foot or other means of transport to collect the sacred water. After collecting the water, they use it during rituals at the site and carry a little of the sacred water home. This indicates that the participants have an accumulated experience starting from their journey to the site to when they return, leading to 'augmented' religious experiences. Participants are also able to develop deep connection with the sacred water as a means of fulfilling their religious commitment. It also allows the participants to create a 'material' bond with the site and embodies their (religious and social) identity. This bonding is considered to trigger sensory experiences that can lead to extraordinary positive experiences evoking positive emotions, in terms of hedonic wellbeing relating to the life

satisfaction of participants by attaining pleasure or going through pleasant emotions, for the participants. In essence, by experiencing the sacred water, participants develop cultural and historical bonds and are emotionally attached to the site and this can in turn augments their religious experiences at the sacred site.

4.4.4 The influence of the social settings in augmenting the religious experiences

The social settings in Hinduism play a salient and inextricable role according to the RAs. It influences a person's social traits by shaping his/her relationship with others and influencing his/her social activities. This in turn can potentially influence the individual's religious behaviours and lifestyle which may include values, ethics and ideals. The sub-theme 'social settings augmenting the religious experiences' relates to the social aspects that the Festival facilitates for participants and cannot be experienced through the normal everyday religious practices. It is made up of four constituents, namely 'dynamic and active participation', 'social learning', 'social flow' and 'facilitators of social engagement', as illustrated in Figure 4.5.

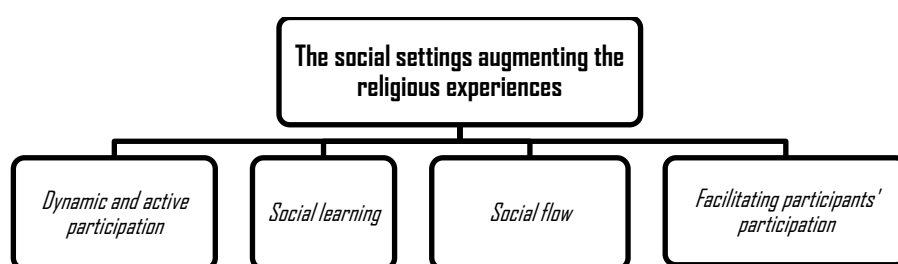


Figure 4.5: The influence of the social settings in augmenting the religious experiences

4.4.4.1 Dynamic and active participation

The constituent 'dynamic and active participation' refers to the high number of participants in the Festival. The constituent emerged from the analyses of four of the eight RAs and their responses can be seen in Box 4.15 below.

Box 4.15: Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent 'dynamic and active participation'

<i>The Festival</i>	
ORO4	"Social factor is this...that <i>they feel part of the huge society</i> ...And when they group, as I mentioned, they will contribute towards the success of their own family, of the community and of the country."

Box 4.15 (continued): Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent ‘dynamic and active participation’

The Festival	
ORO5	“...at the end of the day, it is the satisfaction. The festival helps thousands of people, because Maha Shivaratri is the only occasion to serve (sewa) [selfless service made to benefit others] thousands of people in one go...I think it is a personal satisfaction which we feel and it cannot be described because happiness/emotions are things which cannot be described, you have to live it within yourself to experience the joy... ”
The journey to and from Ganga Talao	
ORA1	“...when we are talking about Maha Shivaratri, we are talking about the mass of people. And during Maha Shivaratri there are also many people of different communities joining together in the walk; you find Christians, Chinese and other people...We have people from abroad coming to Mauritius from Trinidad and Tobago, South Africa, Reunion island, now even from India they come for the Maha Shivaratri festival...we have all mixture of people...we have thousands and thousands of participants walking in the street, thousands of cars going to Ganga Talao... ”
ORO2	“...it is only during the Maha Shivaratri that there are 400,000-500,000 Hindus coming together... crowd contributes to an experience for someone walking... mass is important ”

ORA1, ORO2, ORO4 and ORO5, related the views of their organisations on the high number of local participants in the Festival. When participants walk together in huge numbers, this creates a ‘sense of communitas’; these are psychological manifestations of what the participants experience during the Festival. ‘A sense of communitas’/sense of togetherness refer to the sense of unity among participants and the feeling of being part of the society during the walk. ORO4 identified that during the walk, the participants are united in one big society where friendship is the bond between them. The sense of community during the walk in a way also helps to uphold Hindu identity. By experiencing this oneness, participants are immersed in the same religious activity, as indicated by ORO4 who stated that by walking together in a group, the participants are in fact praying together for the well-being of their families, community and country. As such, the participants jointly experience not only praying together but also escapism from their daily routines; this triggers liminal and transformative experiences as well as the social flow during the Festival. This unique communal experience arising from the ‘dynamic and active participation’ augments the participants’ religious experiences during the Festival such that they undergo ecstatic feelings. With a mass participation, the Festival becomes the only event in Mauritius where volunteers get to serve thousands of people in one go (ORO5). This also stimulates indescribable feelings for those helping the mass in their journey. As a consequence, volunteers as well as participants are able to experience the augmented religious experiences of the journey to and from Ganga Talao.

The large number of people participating in the Festival indicates the religious commitment of the local Hindu community vis-à-vis the Festival and their religion as well as its importance and uniqueness. The words ‘mass’ and ‘crowd’ were commonly used terms by ORA1 and ORO2, indicating the active involvement of participants, including those who walk, sharing the same cultural or religious values and goals. Mass participants are involved in religiously motivated activity, the walk, and this can instigate a sense of grandeur and help to develop a greater sense of

belonging, unity and community that elicit ecstatic feelings. This also helps participants to reinforce their religious and social identity and to create a sense of attachment to the Festival and the site. As such, mass participation allows participants to access intense, unique and personal augmented experiences along the way to and from Ganga Talao. Mass participation is extended to include both Hindus and non-Hindus participating in the Festival (ORA1). Therefore, the Festival can potentially be a source of fostering the Mauritian identity as well as fostering religious and social identity and promoting tolerance amongst Mauritian communities. In effect, the Festival not only helps individuals to socially attach with other non-Hindu Mauritians and tourists but also builds a community spirit among the non-Hindu Mauritians and tourists.

4.4.4.2 Social learning

‘Social learning’ refers to the strengthening of the participants’ skills and understanding through communal activity. The analyses of the interviews indicated that this constituent emerged from five of the eight RAs and their responses can be seen in Box 4.16.

Box 4.16: Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent ‘social learning’

The preparation	
ORA3	“...they [participants] will undertake projects to participate in the Maha Shivaratri. This generally takes the form of a Kanwar. This gives youngsters the opportunity first to come together, to plan - making the Kanwar needs planning - and second it is also an occasion for the youngsters - in a group there needs to be someone who leads - to form a group, to build a team...so they learn leadership skills. One person must be able to say what to do, what not to do and how to do things. Management aspects and aspects of ‘division of work’: you buy thread, he will buy bamboo, he will buy that etc. It is an occasion to form a person in different fields. And now, sometimes it may take a month to build a Kanwar...”
ORO5	“...there are certain youngsters who start getting together...socialising...forming committees in their regions...contributing financially to build their Kanwar, etc...the social aspect, which comes into play...helps each one to discover the other. They converse, discuss, share and discover certain hidden skills of their neighbours and friends...it is a way to learn religious values...it is the youngsters who will be ambassadors of tomorrow, of the future... They will pass on this religious or spiritual flambeau to the future generation, and they have to keep this flambeau alive... So there is a need to keep this dharma [duty] alive. That is also our mission; we are indebted to our parents, to our gurus (teachers), to the rishis munis [sages] who have bequeath the values as a heritage to us. It’s up to us now to see how we are going to hand over this heritage to the future generations... ”
The journey to and from Ganga Talao	
ORA2	“People walk because they want to keep a tradition...people were not having locomotion facilities, logistic...the only means was walking...for one year people did it, for two years, three years...twenty five years they did it all through walking; this became a tradition in itself. So they maintain this, so while doing it they remember their ancestors, what they were doing, and they just follow the trail. ”

Box 4.16 (continued): Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent ‘social learning’

<i>The journey to and from Ganga Talao</i>	
ORA3	<i>“The individual with everybody together is something he won’t have when he is alone. This creates a communion among all the participants. And this brings us to the situation where we all have the belief and we have the relief that we are not alone. When he is not alone, he can relate, he can exchange and he can enrich himself. All individual experience is one thing, all experience vis-à-vis the other is different. And often we have experience which is not that good and others which are more enriching.”</i>
ORO1	<i>“Participants who walk help each other. The preparation of what they eat, if for example a family member has prepared food, they share the food with the group”</i>
ORO4	<i>“...one more thing our organisation does, it distributes a prayer booklet to all the participants who walk...which is full of all types of bhajans and kirtans...”</i>
<i>The Char Pahar ki Pooja</i>	
ORO1	<i>“Yes there is a social aspect as we interact with people in the Mandirs, we build a relationship, a friendship...we are sharing our ideas. It is like this.”</i>

During the preparation, ‘social learning’ occurred through firstly the building of Kanwars (ORA3 and ORO5) and by sharing religious and social values and promoting cultural legacy (ORO5). ‘Social learning’ is a psychological manifestation whereby the participant strengthens his/her skills and understandings by being exposed to different situations during the preparation of the Festival. It was seen as an excellent opportunity for the participants, including young children and youngsters who are not yet of age to have jobs, to learn and socially benefit from building Kanwars by gaining several management competences, one of which was leadership skills. ORA3 also mentioned that building Kanwars can take several weeks and, in doing so, the zeal of the individuals is maintained throughout the Festival. The artistic creation of a Kanwar demands creativity, problem-solving and time management skills as well as sacrifice, patience, dedication and commitment that an individual ‘further’ develops during the preparation. The participants are therefore able to learn how to work in a group with like-minded people and share values, purposes and interests. This implies that the participant can benefit at an intrapersonal level through the communal activity or the experience of making a Kanwar. As the group gathers regularly and works together, they are able to interact, share ideas and also develop and establish relationships with their peers irrespective of their age and social differences: the notion of *communitas* is developed.

‘Social learning’ also occurred through the sharing of religious and social values and the promotion of cultural legacy (ORO5). These values are shared among friends, acquaintances and family members. In regard to cultural legacy, parents act as mentors and guide youngsters by transposing religious values, identity, cultures, principles, etiquettes and dogmas. Hence, both adults and children experience ‘social learning’ by participating in the Festival and they feel enriched in terms of gaining knowledge and achieving personal growth. So, the Festival is an opportunity for children and youngsters to learn and observe from their elders and as a result Hindu culture and traditions are sustained. Therefore, working together as a community for the preservation of the Hindu tradition, cultures and values is an ‘augmented’ religious experience for the participants during the preparation.

During the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the aspect of cultural legacy, which is also a psychological process, arose. The walk was an opportunity for older generations to pass on traditions to the younger generations (ORA2). The walk was seen as being a cultural legacy to the younger generation where the latter has the opportunity to maintain the traditions and remember their ancestors. In effect, an individual can enhance his/her knowledge and help in the perpetuation of the Hindu culture and traditions. Also, knowledge can be shared through the distribution of prayer booklets, which contain religious prayers provided to the participants who walk (ORO4). Through the use of the prayer books, the participants have an opportunity to read and learn prayers. They can therefore sing, pray or follow prayers alongside others during their journey. Consequently, the participants have the opportunity to learn, inculcate and enhance religious values, morals and knowledge. As such, the aspect of social learning can not only influence the participants' social ethics, satisfaction and loyalty but also augment their religious experiences by producing heightened positive emotions during the walk as a result of social engagement.

'Social learning' was also considered by the RAs to arise during the journey to and from Ganga Talao, as a product of communal experience (ORA3 and ORO1). Being amongst others, individuals are provided with the opportunity to exchange ideas thereby enriching one another (ORA3). Through social learning, participants have the opportunity to broaden their knowledge, skills and understanding of others' social behaviour. This social learning is a collective experience which is unique as it would never have occurred if individuals could not celebrate the Festival together. Through social learning, individuals are able to create a sharing mind-set with family, friends and others and think and behave well during the Festival; this in turn brings an additional plus to the individual and his or her surroundings. The collective experiences gained during the Festival can therefore augment the participants' religious experiences. This learning process can potentially trigger the experience of heightened pleasant feelings (e.g. ecstatic, spirited, determined and blessed) among participants. Therefore, social learning is capable of augmenting the religious experiences for participants during the walk. Additionally, ORO1 identified that during the walk, members of one group tend to help one another, for example by sharing food. By communally experiencing the sharing of food, participants reinforce their social bonds with other members of their group. This unique communal experience can only occur during the walk as it allows participants to create personal meaningful, transcending and religious/spiritual experiences; this creates the augmented religious experiences for the local participants who walk.

'Social learning' was also an outcome of the communal experience during the Char Pahar ki Pooja. During the night of prayers, participants have the opportunity to learn more about sharing with others (ORO1). Being amongst others, individuals share many things including ideas and prayer items. This sharing aspect is thought to help the individual to enrich the other: the sharing experiences help them to build up socially and psychologically. The collective experience is unique as it would never have occurred if participants would not be praying and sharing together. As a result, the sharing mind-set during the Char Pahar ki Pooja was seen as a social factor that

augmented the religious experiences of those participating in the prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja.

4.4.4.3 Social flow

Social flow involves the continuous interaction between two or more people within a group; it entails individuals acting and communicating together as a group as well as the group members being emotionally involved with others in the group. From the analyses of the interviews, only one out of the eight representatives of the RA related to ‘social flow’, as shown in Box 4.17.

Box 4.17: Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent ‘social flow’

<i>The Festival</i>	
ORA3	“For the Festival, <i>everyone goes together</i> , maybe with the same objective, they have an affinity that we are all together socially...When we add all the personal experience of all individuals (which the participant won’t have when he is alone), when they are within this medium for all these groups present in all the temples in all the regions, <i>all the good things in their minds will bring the benefit of the individual and everybody else, this would not have been possible if everyone stayed in their corner. There is the mindset of sharing with everybody, communal sacrifice and communal penance.</i> ”
<i>The journey to and from Ganga Talao</i>	
ORA3	“...there are also individuals but rarely there will be an individual by himself, as they will be a <i>minimum group of 2 people to 10 or at times 20...established a foundation among themselves of unity, comprehension, leadership, responsibility.</i> ”

‘Social flow’ was considered in terms of being co-active during the journey to and from Ganga Talao because, as ORA3 identified, participants were part of a group consisting of 2 people or up to 20 people and did things together, for instance they took part in the walk and gained experiences collectively. The participants in the group also experience communal sacrifice and establish a mindset of sharing throughout their journey; in essence they gain mental experiences together. By walking in a group of more than 2, the participants in effect experience companionship and communitas or a sense of togetherness as part of their journey, and this shows a process and formation of social and interpersonal relationship among participants of diverse social background walking together for same religious goals or values. The walk is therefore an occasion for the participants to consolidate ties with others, develop a sense of camaraderie, and experience a greater sense of pride, unity and belonging as well as a sense of community. The interactions were also considered to allow the participants to collectively learn about their religious values, identity, cultures, principles, etiquettes and dogmas. Consequently, the feeling of being part of a group and the collective experience causes the participant to go through heightened experience, thereby augmenting his/her religious experiences.

4.4.4.4 Facilitating participants' participation

The last constituent 'facilitating participants' participation' refers to the organisations' providing help to the participants throughout the walk and at the sacred site. The analyses of the interviews revealed that the responses of four of the eight RAs related to this constituent; these responses are found in Box 4.18.

Box 4.18: Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent 'facilitating participants' participation'

<i>The journey to and from Ganga Talao</i>	
ORA1	"Now even those who are not walking (people who volunteer to receive participants who walk on the road and at their residents providing them with places to rest and free food) they interact with participants who walk. There are people who don't even think of undertaking the walk but do participants a service. This in itself is a prayer. So there are so many interactions between the participants who walk, other Mauritians and the volunteers. The Festival itself is a celebration of interactions and unity."
ORO3	"We have our organising committee which we set up by taking two people from each of our 'cellule' (posts), i.e. 190 and 190 making 380 members who start operating during this celebration...friendship is involved; it is an opportunity to also make new friends. It is very spiritual...We have set up the posts, we start giving pamphlets that give indication of where we are (and that the temple is here)...This we distribute."
ORO5	"The Festival helps thousands of people, because Maha Shivaratri is the only Festival providing the occasion to serve (sewa) [selfless service made to benefit others] thousands of people in one go and on any other day, this is very minimum."
<i>The visit to Ganga Talao</i>	
ORO1	"Interaction with other Hindus who are not undertaking the walk, but who are doing their best efforts to help the participants by offering them with drinks and bringing something in the temples where they are resting, by offering foot massage facilities or by applying balm where it is hurting. It is an experience...The mindset of service to participants (service to others) is extraordinary. Each group has their turn to prepare food, in our temples. We prepared a calendar noting which group is going to which temple, each group being there for 6-7 hours, then they stop and there is a change of group. Some sleep over there and then join other groups. Even the cleaning is done by volunteers. This is an extraordinary experience."

The constituent 'facilitating participants' participation' is an important part of the Festival for the RAs. In 'facilitating participants' participation' the volunteers, present along the route to and from Ganga Talao and at the sacred site, provide services and look after or care for participants. These volunteers can be Hindus who do not take part in the walk but are involved in the voluntary provision of services to participants (ORA1). These volunteers perceive that the rendering of voluntary services is a 'worship of God through service to mankind'. The volunteers can be individuals or organisations (ORO1 and ORO3). Volunteers provide participants with food, a place to rest (ORA1), drinks, foot massage facilities and balm for the participants who are in pain (ORO1). ORO1 also elaborated that at the Ganga Talao, they work systematically in four teams during the 24 hour period, for optimum results in providing service to the participants.

The provision of services (sewa) requires the volunteers to interact with those receiving the service. The services therefore effectively are for providing the participants who walk with the basic needs

for their journey as well as allowing facilitation of social interaction between them and the volunteers. In a way, these services augment the religious experiences of participants. A positive social exchange/engagement between the participants who walk and volunteers is likely to positively influence the level of satisfaction of these participants and therefore their augmented religious experiences along the way to the site and at the site. Therefore, without the volunteers, the interaction among ‘participants-participants’ and ‘participants-volunteers’ would be jeopardised, thereby also affecting the ‘augmented’ religious experiences of participants for the Festival.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the representatives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) have provided insights into what their organisation considers to be (1) the significance of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) for the local Hindu community, (2) the *core religious experiences* for the participants and (3) the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* during the Festival.

In regard to the significance of the Festival, the RAs consider that the Festival has both religious and social significances for the local Hindu community. Four themes emerged from the analyses of the RAs’ interviews, namely ‘celebrating the splendour of the Supreme divinity’, ‘religious significance of the Festival’, ‘performing core religious actions’ and ‘fostering religious and social identity’. These themes can be related to Smart’s (1996, 1998) model; the seven dimensions of religion. From the perspective of the RA organisations, the local Hindus pay reverence to Lord Shiva, the Supreme divinity of the trinity in Hinduism, for imbibing the lethal poison to save humanity (*narrative dimension*). For this major annual Festival, the Hindu participants are expected to undertake a range of religious actions, including fasting (*ethical dimension*), praying in a temple (*material dimension*), carrying out a pilgrimage to and from Ganga Talao, performing rituals at the sacred site and collecting the sacred water (*practical/ritual dimension*). Participating in the Festival and carrying out these religious actions is thought to allow the local Hindu community to undergo both physical and mental experiences. For instance, by walking, a participant is expected to experience different bodily feelings, such as hardship, fatigue and trouble, and emotions, as outlined in Box 4.2. These align with Smart’s (1996, 1998) *experiential and emotional dimension*. Furthermore, during the course of the Festival, the members of the Hindu community also have the opportunity to unite, interact and build/strengthen ties with others, thus enabling them to celebrate their identity (*social dimension*). Overall, during the Festival, the Hindu community is envisaged as perpetuating their ancestral traditions, culture and belief systems (*doctrinal and philosophical dimension*). The RAs have therefore provided insights into the views of their organisation in relation to (a) the potential meanings attached to the Festival by the local Hindu community, (b) the importance of the Festival in the (religious, public and private) lives and behaviours of the Hindu participants and (c) how the Hindu participants celebrate and practice their religion and belief system during the Festival.

In order to develop the understanding of the nature of the religious experiences the study has adopted product theory from marketing. It has used Levitt's (1981) typology and Kotler's (1994) conceptualisation of product levels, see Section 2.3.3.2. In this chapter, the focus has been on the *core religious experiences* and the *augmented nature of the religious experiences*. The *actual Festival product* (the four components of the Festival: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja) is examined in *Chapter 5*. The adoption of this theoretical framework within the context of a religious and pilgrimage festival is one of the main contributions of this study. Using the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities, this rare and novel approach has helped to enhance our understanding on the three levels of the religious experiences that the local Hindu participants seek from the Festival.

In terms of the *core religious experiences*, four broad themes emerged from the analyses of the RAs' interviews, namely 'closeness and connectedness to God', 'self-purification', 'self-transformation' and 'self-actualisation'. By participating in the Festival, these religious bodies consider that the participants fulfil their divine duties and seek to gain religious benefits. The religious benefits sought by the Hindu participants are existential and vary from individual to individual based on the types of devotional practices they undertake during the Festival. Overall, the themes identified from the analyses of the RAs' interviews show that the *core religious experiences and benefits* that the Festival offers to the participants underpins the essence of Hinduism which is strongly bounded on moral principles and dogmas that require the adherents uphold their *Dharma* (religious duties).

In respect of the *augmented nature of the religious experiences*, the analyses of the RAs' interviews indicated that the religious experiences are heightened by the settings in which the Hindu participants find themselves. These include (a) the religious settings, (b) the physical settings and (c) the social settings. Firstly, within the religious settings, the prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja were likely to elevate the participants' religious experiences. They could potentially experience such heightened emotions and religious experiences through their deep involvement in these prayers, by making a personal sacrifice and by being freed from social barriers. Secondly, the physical settings acted as a catalyst in augmenting the religious experiences for the Hindu participants. Such enhanced emotions and religious experiences were expected to be triggered when the participants felt immersed within the 'festival settings' and the surrounding 'atmosphere'. Additionally, 'place dependence and attachment' as part of the physical settings is also expected to have a psychological influence on the participants at Ganga Talao during the Festival. Lastly, the RAs expected the social settings to influence an individual's social traits by shaping the individual's relationship with others and influencing his/her social activities. 'Social settings' were made up of 'dynamic and active participation', 'social learning', 'social flow' and 'facilitators of social engagement'. The findings show that Mauritian non-Hindus and Hindus from other parts of the world also participate. This is considered to offer the local Hindu participants, and foreign Hindus, the opportunity to reinforce their (religious and social) identities and help the Mauritian

Hindus and non-Hindus to build a shared social and community identity, thus fostering tolerance. Furthermore, the findings show that the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* adds value to the *core religious experiences and benefits*, thus making the Festival experiences distinct from other Hindu religious festivals and activities.

Overall, the use and application of the product theory from marketing has proved to be a good theoretical framework in relation to understanding the different levels of religious experiences offered by the Festival and how they arise. The next chapter, *Chapter 5*, will explore the main activities undertaken by the local Hindus who participated in the Festival and the level of importance attached to those activities in each of the four components within the *actual Festival product*. It will also analyse the overall evaluation of the Festival, by the respondents, during their last participation.

CHAPTER 5: THE ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY LOCAL HINDU RESIDENTS AND THEIR RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES DURING THE FESTIVAL

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter, *Chapter 4*, reported the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities on the religious significance of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) for the local Hindu community and the perceived core and augmented religious experiences offered by the Festival for the local Hindu participants.

This chapter is the second findings chapter focusing on the analysis of the quantitative survey of the Mauritian Hindu respondents in relation to their last participation in the Festival. This chapter identifies key religious activities performed by Hindu residents during the Festival that potentially need to be preserved and maintained from any future commoditisation. It therefore seeks to provide a comprehensive insight into the activities undertaken and the religious experiences attached to the activities in each of the *actual Festival product* (the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja). The three objectives set out for this chapter are:

1. To analyse (a) the extent to which different activities were undertaken by the respondents and (b) the importance they attached to each of the activities/statements contributing to their religious experiences, in each of the four components of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri.
2. To establish whether, or not, there are differences by gender in regard to (a) the religious activities undertaken by the respondents and (b) the religious experiences during the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri.
3. To explore whether, or not, there are differences between males and females in their overall evaluation of the Festival during their most recent participation.

Based on these objectives, this chapter consists of three sections. Firstly, Section 5.2 reports a description of what the respondents did the last time they participated in the Festival. Secondly, Section 5.3 provides a detailed analysis of the activities the respondents carried out for the Festival and the level of importance attached to each of the activities/statements in relation to their religious experiences. Thirdly, Section 5.4 focuses on the analysis of the overall evaluation of the Festival by the respondents.

For each of these three sections, the respondents' gender is used as the independent variable (see Section 3.6.3.6). To test for and compare the differences between males and females, two hypotheses were formulated which are:

- H0 (the null hypothesis): there is no statistically significant difference between the male and female respondents in relation to the activities they undertook and the level of importance they attached to each of the activities in terms of the contribution to the religious experiences.
- H1 (the alternative hypothesis): there is a statistically significant difference between the male and female respondents in terms of the activities they undertook and the level of importance attached to each of the activities in terms of the contribution to the religious experiences.

For all the questions relating to the activities the respondents carried out, measured on nominal scales of 'Yes' or 'No', a Chi-square test for independence (X^2) was used to establish whether there was a difference by gender and the activities performed in each of the four components of the Festival. For the sets of questions regarding the level of importance, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to investigate whether there was a difference by gender and the level of importance attached to the activities/statements relating to the respondents' religious experiences.

5.2 PARTICIPATION CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIOURS OF RESPONDENTS

5.2.1 Background

This sub-section has three parts. In the first part, an overall description of the respondents' participation regarding the year of their last participation, their companionship and the main reason for taking part in the Festival, by gender are provided. The second part outlines the evaluation of the respondents' behaviours as part of the four components of the Festival. The last part reports the level of agreement on the reasons for the respondents' attendance at the Festival in terms of commitment to religious observance and identity formation.

5.2.2 The participation characteristics of the respondents during the last Festival

5.2.2.1 Last year of participation

The respondents were asked in which year they last participated in the Festival. The results can be found in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: The last year of participation for respondents by gender						
Last year of participation in the Festival	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
In 2014	183	88.8	180	87.4	363	88.1
Before 2014 (From 2006-2013)	23	11.2	26	12.6	49	11.9
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0
Yates' Continuity Correction: 0.093 df: 1 p: 0.761						

As the data was collected prior to the 2015 Festival, the latest/most recent year of participation was 2014. The results from Table 5.1 shows that 88.1% (363) of the respondents last participated during the 2014 Festival compared to 11.9% (49) of the respondents who previously had last taken part in the Festival in one year between 2006 and 2013 (inclusive). Thus, the sample consists primarily of Hindu respondents who had attended the most recent Festival at that time.

The Chi-square analysis, incorporating Yates Correction, as it is a 2 by 2 table, demonstrates that the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that there was no statistically significant difference in relation to the relative proportions of males and females who had participated in the 2014 Festival and/or those who had participated in the Festival prior to 2014. It also means that the context of the religious experiences for both male and female respondents is similar.

5.2.2.2 Companionship

The respondents, when asked to choose from a list of five options relating to the nature of the groups with whom they went to Ganga Talao during their last participation, answered as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Companionship of the respondents during their last participation by gender

Companionship	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I went with family members only	104	50.5	136	66.0	240	58.3
I went with family members and friends	48	23.3	50	24.3	98	23.8
I went with friends	29	14.1	6	2.9	35	8.5
I went as part of a couple	13	6.3	11	5.3	24	5.8
I went alone	12	5.8	3	1.5	15	3.6
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0
<i>Chi-square Value:</i>		24.988	<i>df:</i>		4	<i>p:</i> 0.000
<i>Cramer's V value:</i>		0.246	<i>Cramer's V p:</i>			0.000

Overall, 96.4% (397) of the respondents chose to go in a group. This indicates that the Festival has a social connotation in that the respondents were mainly accompanied by family, friends or their partners during their last participation.

As the p value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a statistically significant difference in respect of whom the respondents travelled with to the Festival, with female respondents being more likely to attend in the company of family members only or with family and friends and less likely than males to go with friends, as a couple or alone. The Cramer V value (0.246) shows a weak relationship between the gender of respondents and with whom they travelled to the Festival. The weak effect size was determined using Cohen's (1988) criteria, where 0.1 represents a small effect, 0.3 shows a medium effect and 0.5 or more indicates a large effect.

5.2.2.3 Reason for participating in the Festival

The respondents were asked what the two most important reasons for their participation were, the last time they participated in the Festival. Table 5.3 illustrates the first main reason provided by respondents for participating in the Festival. The first main reason gives an indication of the most likely reason why the respondents chose to participate in the Festival.

Table 5.3: First main reason for the last time the respondents participated by gender

First main reason for participation	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Religious reasons	158	76.7	167	81.1	325	78.9
Social reasons	26	12.6	18	8.7	44	10.7
Festival related reasons	22	10.7	21	10.2	43	10.4
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0
<i>Chi-square Value:</i>		1.727	<i>df:</i>		2	<i>p:</i> 0.422

The data provided by the respondents were categorised as 'religious reasons', 'social reasons' and 'Festival related reasons'. The 'religious reasons' included responses related to customs and culture/traditions, expressing one's belief, seeking blessings and carrying out core religious

activities such as praying/worshipping God and collecting the sacred water. The social reasons were associated with accompanying friends and/or family, reaffirming one's Hindu identity, experiencing a sense of togetherness and volunteering purposes. The Festival related reasons were associated with experiencing the atmosphere and the annual Festival and its uniqueness.

The responses given in Table 5.3 demonstrate that 78.9% (325) of the respondents gave a religious reason as their main reason for their participation in the Festival. This gives an indication that the respondents took part in the Festival to demonstrate their loyalty, religious commitment and belief through practicing their religion. There is no statistically significant difference between the Hindu males and Hindu females regarding the first main reason for the last time they participated in the Festival (Chi-square is 1.727 and the significance value is 0.422). Therefore, the males and females were likely to participate in the Festival for the same reason.

5.2.3 The behaviour of respondents during the four components of the Festival

5.2.3.1 The preparation component

5.2.3.1.1 Days in advance for preparation

The respondents were asked about the number of days, in advance, they started preparations for the Festival the last time they participated. The results are provided in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: The number of days in advance that the respondents started to prepare for the Festival by gender

<i>Days in advance for preparation</i>	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
0 – 7	103	50.0	118	57.3	221	53.6
8 - 15	63	30.6	71	34.5	134	32.5
24 +	32	15.5	13	6.3	45	10.9
16 - 23	8	3.9	4	1.9	12	2.9
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0
<i>Chi-square Value: 10.851 df: 3 p: 0.013</i>						
<i>Cramer's V value: 0.162 Cramer's V p: 0.013</i>						

As shown in Table 5.4, 86.1% (355) of the respondents started their preparation 15 days or less prior to the Festival. As will be evident later in this chapter, most respondents started their preparation by performing religious activities related to the Festival (see Section 5.3.2).

The results of the Chi-square test reveal that the null hypothesis is rejected and that there is statistically significant difference between the number of days in advance that the respondents

started to prepare for the Festival and the gender of the respondents. The female respondents were more likely to start preparing closer to the day when they travelled to Ganga Talao. 91.8% of females prepared for 15 days or less while the equivalent for males was 80.6%. The males were more likely to spend a longer time in preparing for the Festival than the women. The Cramer's V value (0.162) shows a weak relationship between gender and the number of days in advance that the respondents start their preparation for the Festival.

5.2.3.2 *The journey to and from Ganga Talao component*

5.2.3.2.1 *Mode of travel of the respondents*

Table 5.5 reports the responses of the local Hindu respondents on how they travelled to and from Ganga Talao the last time they participated in the Festival.

Table 5.5: Mode of travel to and from Ganga Talao by gender						
<i>Mode of travel</i>	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Using Transport Only	88	42.7	125	60.7	213	51.7
On Foot Only	73	35.4	43	20.9	116	28.2
Both Foot and using Transport	45	21.8	38	18.4	83	20.1
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0
<i>Chi-square Value: 14.776 df: 2 p: 0.001</i>						
<i>Cramer's V value: 0.189 Cramer's V p: 0.001</i>						

The results from Table 5.5 illustrate that 51.7% (213) of the respondents used transport to travel to and from Ganga Talao, 28.2% (116) travelled by foot and 20.1% (83) travelled both on foot and by transport. By walking to and/or from Ganga Talao, the respondents have the opportunity to purify and cleanse themselves and to show their level of commitment and sacrifice by paying reverence to Lord Shiva.

The result of the Chi-square test, with a statistically significant value of 0.001, indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected and there is a statistically significant difference in the mode of travel in respect of Hindu males and Hindu females. While there are more women 60.7% (125) who used transport only, there were more men 35.4% (73) who walked throughout their journey to and from the sacred site. The Cramer V value of 0.19 indicates that the relation between gender and mode of transport is weak.

5.2.3.2.2 Reasons for walking

The respondents, if they walked, were asked the main reason for doing so. Table 5.6 shows the reasons for the choice of walking to and/or from the sacred site during the last participation in the Festival.

Table 5.6: Reasons for walking by gender

<i>Reasons for traveling 'on foot'</i>	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Religious and cultural reasons	57	49.6	40	51.3	97	50.3
To make a personal sacrifice	47	40.9	33	42.3	80	41.5
Social reasons	11	9.6	5	6.4	16	8.3
Total	115	100.0	78	100.0	193	100.0
<i>Chi-square Value: 0.608 df: 2 p: 0.738</i>						

The explanations for the respondents walking were categorised into three reasons: 'religious and cultural reasons', 'to experience the walk' and for 'social reasons'. The 'religious and cultural reasons' were composed of honouring/showing devotion to/respecting/receiving blessings from Lord Shiva, demonstrating their religious belief, carrying the sacred water and adhering to culture and tradition. The second reason for walking was 'to make a personal sacrifice' made up of self-penance, self-purification, self-satisfaction, carrying the Kanwar and experiencing the walk. Lastly the 'social reasons', associated with the walk, were to accompany family and/or friends, enjoy the crowd and have fun. Whilst 91.8% (177) of the respondents chose walking to and/or from Ganga Talao for religious and cultural reasons, as well as to make a sacrifice, 8.3% (16) walked to meet social goals. Most of those who walked did so to showcase their devotion and reaffirm their belief in Lord Shiva.

In the Table 5.6, the p value is more than 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis is not rejected. Hence, there are no statistically significant difference between the Hindu males and Hindu females regarding the distribution of the reasons for walking during their last participation in the Festival.

5.2.3.2.3 Main reason for not travelling on foot

Those respondents who did not walk to and from the sacred site were asked to provide a main reason for not choosing to go 'on foot' during their last participation. Table 5.7 shows the respondents' main reason for travelling to and/ or from the sacred site using transport.

Table 5.7: Main reason for not choosing to travel on foot by gender

Main reason for not traveling 'on foot'	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Personal constraints (e.g. age, kids, personal/family sickness, Accompany friends and/or family, Volunteerism)	61	48.0	79	52.0	140	50.2
Habit of using transport (e.g. Convenience, Distance, Never walked, Walking is too tiring, time-related)	40	31.5	56	36.8	96	34.4
Other constraints (e.g. Work/University/School, Weather, No one to accompany me, other reasons)	26	20.5	17	11.2	43	15.4
Total	127	100.0	152	100.0	279	100.0
Chi-square Value:		4.662	df: 2		p: 0.097	

The main reason for not travelling on foot to and/or from Ganga Talao was based on personal constraints 50.2% (140) or the habit of using transport 34.4% (96). As the Chi-square value is 4.662 and the significance value is 0.097, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference by gender and the reasons for not going 'on foot' to and/or from Ganga Talao.

5.2.3.2.4 Time taken to reach Ganga Talao

The respondents were asked about the length of time they took to reach Ganga Talao and their responses are given in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8: Time taken to reach Ganga Talao by gender

Time taken (T) to reach Ganga Talao (Hrs)	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 4 hours (T<4)	91	44.2	109	52.9	200	48.5
More than or equal to 4 hours but less than 8 hours (4≤T<8)	52	25.2	64	31.1	116	28.2
More than or equal to 8 hours (T≥ 8+)	63	30.6	33	16.0	96	23.3
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0
Chi-square Value:		12.236	df: 2		p: 0.002	
Cramer's V value:		0.172			Cramer's V p: 0.002	

The result is hard to interpret given that the time taken by the respondents included those who travel to and/or from the sacred site using transport only, on foot only and both on foot and by transport. The Chi-square value is 12.236 and the significant value is 0.002. The results of the test reveal that the null hypothesis is rejected; there is a statistically significant difference by gender and the time taken to travel to Ganga Talao. The Cramer V value of 0.17 indicates that the relation between gender and time taken to reach Ganga Talao is weak, with more females likely to travel for 'less than 4 hours' and for more than or equal to 4 hours but less than 8 hours, while males are more

likely to travel for 8 or more hours. The results also indicate that more males 30.6% (63) than 16% (33) females travelled for 8 or more hours to reach Ganga Talao, coincides with the fact that more males tend to undertake the pilgrimage on foot (see Section 5.2.3.2.1) which means that the journey tended to be longer for the males. The longer the respondents take to reach the sacred site, the more prolonged their sacrifice. Therefore, the results indicate that the males are more likely to undergo prolonged hours of sacrifice compared to the females.

5.2.3.3 The visit to Ganga Talao

5.2.3.3.1 Time spent at Ganga Talao

The respondents were asked about the length of time (in hours) they spent at Ganga Talao during their last participation in the Festival. The results are given in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9: Time spent at Ganga Talao by gender						
<i>Time spent (T) in hours at Ganga Talao</i>	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than 4 hours ($T < 4$)	99	48.1	132	64.1	231	56.1
More than or equal to 4 hours but less than 8 hours ($4 \leq T < 8$)	78	37.9	56	27.2	134	32.5
More than or equal to 8 hours ($T \geq 8$)	29	14.0	18	8.7	47	11.4
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0
<i>Chi-square Value: 10.901 df: 2 p: 0.004</i>						
<i>Cramer's V value: 0.163 Cramer's V p: 0.004</i>						

Table 5.9 presents an overall indication of the time spent by respondents at the sacred site. The analysis shows that 56.1% (231) respondents spent less than 4 hours at the site during the Festival, meaning that a high proportion of respondents tended to complete their religious activities, as covered in Section 5.3.4.1, relatively quickly. The time spent by respondents may vary and depends on several factors, for instance, on whether they attended other activities that are offered during the Festival, consumed the free food and drink or visited all the temples at the site.

The Chi-square analysis for difference by gender in relation to length of stay at Ganga Talao produced an X^2 value of 10.901. Thus the test reveals that the null hypothesis is rejected; there is a statistically significant difference by gender of respondent and the time spent at Ganga Talao with male respondents tending to spend more time at the Ganga Talao than females, although the Cramer V value of 0.004 indicates that the difference between of Hindu male and female respondents and the time spent at Ganga Talao is weak.

5.2.3.4 The Char Pahar ki Pooja component

5.2.3.4.1 Attendance in the Char Pahar ki Pooja

The respondents were asked whether they attended the Char Pahar ki Pooja, the last time they participated in the Festival. The results can be found in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10: Attendance in the Char Pahar ki Pooja by gender

Attendance in Char Pahar ki Pooja	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Yes	134	65.0	132	64.1	266	64.6
No	72	35.0	74	35.9	146	35.4
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0
Yates' Continuity Correction:		0.011	df: 1		p:	0.918

The results illustrate that out of the 412 respondents, approximately one third 35.4% (146), did not attend the Char Pahar ki Pooja. The Char Pahar ki Pooja is the final set of prayers at the conclusion to the Festival and involves praying Lord Shiva all night. Therefore, not all the respondents, especially those who have to look after family members, can commit themselves to attend the Char Pahar ki Pooja. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference between Hindu males and Hindu females and their attendance at the Char Pahar ki Pooja and therefore the null hypothesis is not rejected.

5.2.3.4.2 Location for attending the Char Pahar ki Pooja

The respondents were asked where they attended the Char Pahar ki Pooja, the last time they participated in the Festival. The results are shown in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11: Location for attending the Char Pahar ki Pooja by gender

Location of the Char Pahar ki Pooja	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
My Local Temple	126	94.0	121	91.7	247	92.9
Elsewhere	8	6.0	11	8.3	19	7.1
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0
Chi-square Value:		0.560	df: 1		p:	0.454

Table 5.11 illustrates that out of the 266 respondents who attended the Char Pahar ki Pooja, most (92.9%, 247) attended their local temple on the night of the Festival. The local temple is likely to be close to the respondent's house or to be in the same village/town where he/she resides. The purpose of collecting the water from Ganga Talao is to use it as an offering during the Great Night of Lord

Shiva for the Char Pahar ki Pooja at a temple. Although attendance is likely to be in a local temple, a small proportion 7.1% (19) chose to attend the Char Pahar ki Pooja elsewhere.

The value of the Chi-square test is 0.560 and the significant value is 0.454. As the significance value is larger than the alpha value of 0.05, this means that there is no statistically significant difference between the Hindu males and Hindu females and the location of the religious place they attended for the Char Pahar ki Pooja. The result of the test indicates that the null hypothesis is not rejected.

5.2.3.4.3 Number of prayers respondents attended for the Char Pahar ki Pooja

The respondents were asked about the number of prayers they participated in the Char Pahar ki Pooja, and the results of the analysis are presented in Table 5.12. Out of the 266 respondents who previously stated that they had attended the Char Pahar ki Pooja, only 54.1% (144) stated that they attended all the four prayers. The data shows that not all respondents who chose to attend the Char Pahar ki Pooja could commit themselves to attend all four prayers. This may be attributable to either respondents being too tired after having undertaken the other components of the Festival or having personal constraints for instance having to look after children or the elderly or sick family members.

Table 5.12: Number of prayers attended for the Char Pahar ki Pooja by gender

Number of Prayers attended	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Four Pahar	74	55.2	70	53.0	144	54.1
Two Pahar	31	23.1	26	19.7	57	21.4
Three Pahar	16	11.9	20	15.2	36	13.5
One Pahar	13	9.7	16	12.1	29	10.9
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0
Chi-square Value: 1.290 df: 3 p: 0.732						

The result of the Chi-square test indicates that the null hypothesis is not rejected: there is no difference by gender of the respondents and the number of prayers they attended during the Char Pahar ki Pooja.

5.2.4 The level of agreement with reasons for taking part in the Festival

5.2.4.1 Hierarchy of the reasons why it is considered important to take part in the Festival

The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the three statements on the reasons why it was important to take part in the Festival. For this question, a

four-point Likert item scale, with '1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree', was used. The overall median for the respondents on their level of agreement is presented in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13: Overall median of the level of agreement on why it was important to take part in the Festival

<i>Reasons</i>	Overall Median Value
Taking part in the festival is important as it shows a higher level of religious commitment than normal religious observance.	2.00
Taking part in the festival is important because it provides an opportunity for Mauritian Hindus to confirm their social identity as being a Hindu.	2.00
Taking part in the festival is important because it provides an opportunity for Mauritian Hindus to confirm their religious identity as being a Hindu.	2.00

The results presented in Table 5.13 reveal that the respondents 'Agree' with all the three statements, given by an overall median value of 2.00. Therefore, the respondents overall agreed that taking part in the Festival was important in terms of their showing a higher level of religious commitment, as well as being an opportunity to confirm their religious and social identities.

5.2.4.2 The level of agreement for the reason why it was important to take part in the Festival by gender

A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to investigate whether there was a difference in the answers given by males and females. The results on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the three statements are given in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14: The level of agreement of male and female respondents on why it was important to take part in the Festival by gender

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Taking part in the festival is important as it shows a higher level of religious commitment than normal religious observance.	Male	200	2.00	187.86	17471.5	-2.316	0.021	0.12
	Female	199	2.00	212.20				
	Total	399	2.00	-				
Taking part in the festival is important because it provides an opportunity for Mauritian Hindus to confirm their social identity as being a Hindu.	Male	196	2.00	171.11	14232.0	-4.314	0.000	0.22
	Female	191	2.00	217.49				
	Total	387	2.00	-				

Table 5.14 (continued): The level of agreement of male and female respondents on why it was important to take part in the Festival by gender

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Taking part in the festival is important because it provides an opportunity for Mauritian Hindus to confirm their religious identity as being a Hindu.	Male	194	2.00	171.19	14295.0	-4.167	0.000	0.21
	Female	192	2.00	216.05				
	Total	386	2.00	-				

For each of the three statements the null hypothesis is rejected as the p value is less than 0.05. There are statistically significant differences between males and females on the level of agreement regarding their religious commitment, social identity and religious identity as reasons for participating in the Festival. For each of the three statements, males were more likely to agree on the importance of taking part in the Festival than the females, as indicated by the lower mean rank value. However, the effect size in each case is weak ($r = 0.12$ for religious commitment, $r = 0.22$ for social identity and $r = 0.21$ for religious identity).

5.3 PARTICIPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS IN THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF THE FESTIVAL

5.3.1 Background

This section provides the analyses of the activities the respondents carried out in each of the four components of the Festival and how important the activities of each component were in contributing to the religious experiences.

First, participation in each of the activities undertaken by the respondents was measured using a nominal scale of 'Yes' or 'No' to provide data on rates of participation. In addition, the data were also subject to a Chi-square test for independence (X^2) to establish whether there was a difference by gender in terms of the activities undertaken.

Second, the level of importance of the contribution of each of the activities to the religious experiences was measured through a four-point Likert item rating scale with the options '1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Less Important, 4=Not Important'. To test the null hypotheses that there was no difference by gender in terms of the importance attached to participation in each of the activities, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to compare for differences between the answers of the male and female respondents. In each section, for each set of questions, the statements are arranged in a hierarchical table based on their median values to give the overall results. Then, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for each of the activities are presented.

5.3.2 The preparation of the local Hindu residents for the Festival

5.3.2.1 *Hierarchy based on the percentage of activities undertaken by respondents as part of their preparation*

The overall percentage of the ten activities carried out by the respondents as part of their preparation for the Festival, is given in Table 5.15. The results reveal the activities which respondents carried out the most to the least during the preparation.

Table 5.15: Overall participation percentage for each of the activities undertaken by respondents during their preparation

Activities	Overall percentage of those who participated in each activity (%)
Buy religious (Pooja) items for prayers	98.8
Fast (e.g. avoid eating meat products)	97.6
Make a donation to your temple or any other religious organisation for the Festival	91.5
Clean your house and yard thoroughly	89.8
Listen to religious songs (e.g. on radio)	85.2
Carry out prayers that were specific to the Maha Shivaratri Festival	84.0
Wear white clothes as a sign of purification	68.4
Sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)	65.3
Worship at your local temple more often than you normally would	64.6
Build/help to build a Kanwar	25.2

The results reveal that as part of the preparation, the activity that was carried out the most was buying religious items. The buying of religious items is essential for those taking part in the Festival, as without these items the prayers at Ganga Talao and/or for the Char Pahar ki Pooja would not be complete. The activity that was carried out the least was to build or help to build Kanwar. Only a small proportion of respondents (25.3%) were involved in the building of Kanwar. Kanwars are usually carried by those who undertake the walk. And as only a small proportion 28.2% (116) respondents undertake the walk (see Table 5.5 in Section 5.2.3.2.1), it is highly likely that only a small proportion of respondents are involved in the building of Kanwar.

5.3.2.2 *Activities carried out by male and female respondents as part of their preparation*

A Chi-square test was conducted for the religious activities carried out by respondents, both males and females, during the preparation. The results determine the activities which the respondents valued most during the preparation. Table 5.16 shows the results with significant differences between males and females.

Table 5.16: Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents as part of the preparation – significant differences by gender

<i>Wear white clothes as a sign of purification</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	162	78.6	120	58.3	282	68.4			
No	44	21.4	86	47.7	130	31.6			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	18.892	0.000	0.219
									0.000
<i>Worship at your local temple more often than you normally would</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	146	70.9	120	58.3	266	64.6			
No	60	29.1	86	41.7	146	35.4			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	6.630	0.010	0.132
									0.007
<i>Build/help to build a Kanwar</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	68	33.0	36	17.5	104	25.2			
No	138	67.0	170	82.5	308	74.8			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	12.361	0.000	0.179
									0.000

Of the ten activities, the tests reveal that for three activities, as in Table 5.16, the null hypothesis is rejected based on the results of the Chi-Square test as the significance value is less than the alpha value of 0.05. This means that there are differences between genders in terms of wearing white clothes ($\phi = 0.22$ showing a weak effect size), worshipping at temple ($\phi = 0.13$ showing a weak effect size) and building of Kanwar ($\phi = 0.18$ showing a weak effect size) as part of the preparation. The results indicate that the male respondents were more likely to perform each of these three activities compared to the female respondents. Activities such as worshipping at the local temple and building/helping to build a Kanwar are likely to be undertaken during the Festival by respondents. Therefore, these activities are an escape from one's daily routines, amounting to augmented and liminal experiences. As a result, these activities can potentially reinforce the disposition, religious identity and belief of the respondents. Also, male respondents were more likely to wear white clothes as a sign of purification; this demonstrates their religious commitment during the preparation component. By collectively wearing white clothes, for example in a social setting or religious gathering, the male respondents are expressing a sense of togetherness which in turn may influence their religious and social identity.

Table 5.17 shows the results where there was no significant difference by gender for the religious activities they carried out during the preparation. For these seven activities the null hypothesis is not rejected, signifying that there is no statistically significant difference by gender in terms of the level of participation in these activities during the preparation.

Table 5.17: Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents as part of the preparation – no significant differences by gender

<i>Buy religious (Pooja) items for prayers</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	202	98.1	205	99.5	407	98.8			
No	4	1.9	1	0.5	5	1.2			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.810	0.368	-
<i>Fast (e.g. avoid eating meat products)</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	199	96.6	203	98.5	402	97.6			
No	7	3.4	3	1.5	10	2.4			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.922	0.337	-
<i>Make a donation to your temple or any other religious organisation for the Festival</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	191	92.7	186	90.3	377	91.5			
No	15	7.3	20	9.7	35	8.5			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.500	0.480	-
<i>Clean your house and yard thoroughly</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	180	87.4	190	92.2	370	89.8			
No	26	12.6	16	7.8	42	10.2			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	2.147	0.143	-
<i>Listen to religious songs (e.g. on radio)</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	172	83.5	179	86.9	351	85.2			
No	34	16.5	27	13.1	61	14.8			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.693	0.405	-
<i>Carry out prayers that were specific to the Maha Shivaratri Festival</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	170	82.5	176	85.4	346	84.0			
No	36	17.5	30	14.6	66	16.0			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.451	0.502	-
<i>Sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	128	62.1	141	68.4	269	65.3			
No	78	37.9	65	31.6	143	34.7			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	1.542	0.214	-

5.3.2.3 *Hierarchy of the level of importance of activities to the religious experiences of the respondents as part of the preparation for the Festival*

This sub-section focuses on the overall median of the level of importance of ten activities to the respondents' religious experiences as part of their preparation for the Festival. The overall results are presented in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18: Overall median based on the level of importance of each activity to the religious experiences of the respondents during the preparation

<i>Activities</i>	Overall Median Value
Buying religious (Pooja) items.	1.00
Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying, fasting).	1.00
Maintaining your house and yard clean.	1.00
Making one or more donations.	2.00
Listening to religious songs (e.g. on radio).	2.00
Demonstrating the strength of your religious belief through your preparations.	2.00
Wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes.	2.00
Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).	2.00
Performing special acts of worship that were additional to your usual religious activities.	2.00
Helping to build or building a Kanwar.	3.00

Table 5.18 reveals that of the ten activities, three were acknowledged as being 'Very important' as indicated by an overall median value of 1.00, six were considered as 'Important' denoted by an overall median value of 2.00 and the attribute 'helping to build or building a Kanwar' was ranked as 'Less important' given the overall median value of 3.00.

The three activities which were identified as the most important during the preparation component suggests that respondents are religiously motivated to take part in the Festival and they start to build their expectations as well as to plan for the other components of the Festival. The purchase of religious items shows their readiness for carrying out their religious duty for the Festival. The purchase of religious items connected them with the essence of the Festival which is to carry out religious rituals/prayers. Also, the purchase of religious items sets the mood for the Festival. Fasting, on the other hand, helps an individual to be cleansed by forgoing some types of everyday activities or necessities. Both buying religious items and fasting allow an individual to express his/her religious commitment and devotion to God, to the Festival and to their religion.

The activities, denoted by a median of 2.00, were only deemed to be important for the respondents as part of their preparation. This means that although respondents would carry out these activities during the period they prepare for the Festival, these activities were of secondary importance to them.

By contrast, to ‘build/help to build a Kanwar’ was considered to be of less importance, as indicated by a median of 3.00. This may be attributable to the fact that constructing a Kanwar is time consuming, taking up to a month, and requires strict norms during the preparation. As a result, overall, respondents attached less importance to building or helping to build Kanwars, compared to the other attributes.

5.3.2.4 The level of importance of the activities during the preparation component to the religious experiences of male and female respondents

Respondents were asked to state how important each of the ten activities during the preparation component were to their religious experiences during the Festival. A Mann-Whitney U test investigated whether there was a difference between male and female respondents and their attitudes towards the importance of these ten activities. The results which showed significant differences by gender can be found in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19: The level of importance of each of the activities during the preparation component to the religious experiences of male and female respondents – significant differences by gender

Activities	Gender	N	Median	Mean Rank	U	z	p	r
Helping to build or building a Kanwar.	Male	183	3.00	162.08				
	Female	162	3.00	185.34				
	Total	345	3.00	-	12824.0	-2.242	0.025	0.12

The null hypothesis is rejected only for one activity: ‘helping to build or building a Kanwar’ ($p = 0.025$ with a small effect size $r = 0.12$). The results show that the male respondents rated ‘helping to build or building a Kanwar’ as being more important (based on the mean ranks) compared to the female respondents. This result also matches with a previous result that the male respondents were also more likely to ‘build/help to build a Kanwar’ (see Section 5.3.2.2).

The results where the Mann-Whitney U test showed no statistically significant difference between male and female respondents can be found at Table 5.20. As the p values were larger than the alpha value of 0.05 for the nine activities, this means that there was no statistically significant difference by gender and the level of importance attached to these different activities relevant to the preparation component. The null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that for both genders these activities were considered as being of equal importance in contributing to their religious experiences during their preparation for the Festival.

Table 5.20: The level of importance of each of the activities during the preparation component to the religious experiences of male and female respondents – no significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying, fasting).	Male	204	1.00	199.00	19685.0	-1.031	0.303	-
	Female	203	1.00	209.03				
	Total	407	1.00	-				
Maintaining your house and yard clean.	Male	203	1.00	206.96	20106.0	-0.574	0.566	-
	Female	204	1.00	201.06				
	Total	407	1.00	-				
Wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes.	Male	203	2.00	205.89	20118.5	-0.441	0.659	-
	Female	203	2.00	201.11				
	Total	406	2.00	-				
Buying religious (Pooja) items.	Male	202	1.00	206.15	19866.0	-0.611	0.541	-
	Female	203	1.00	199.86				
	Total	405	1.00	-				
Making one or more donations.	Male	199	2.00	193.97	18701.0	-0.861	0.389	-
	Female	197	2.00	203.07				
	Total	396	2.00	-				
Demonstrating the strength of your religious belief through your preparations.	Male	199	2.00	188.85	17682.0	-1.244	0.213	-
	Female	191	2.00	202.42				
	Total	390	2.00	-				
Listening to religious songs (e.g. on radio).	Male	196	2.00	191.48	18224.0	-1.319	0.187	-
	Female	200	2.00	205.38				
	Total	396	2.00	-				
Performing special acts of worship that were additional to your usual religious activities.	Male	193	2.00	186.11	17197.5	-0.940	0.347	-
	Female	188	2.00	196.02				
	Total	381	2.00	-				
Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).	Male	190	2.00	190.38	17312.0	-0.358	0.720	-
	Female	186	2.00	186.58				
	Total	376	2.00	-				

5.3.3 The journey to and from Ganga Talao of the respondents

5.3.3.1 *Hierarchy based on the percentage of the activities carried out by respondents during their journey*

The respondents were asked to identify from a list of nine activities what they did on their journey to and from Ganga Talao, measured using a nominal scale of ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. The overall percentages of respondents undertaking each of the activities during their journey to and from Ganga Talao, based on the ‘yes’ answers, are given in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21: Overall percentage of respondents undertaking each of the activities during the journey to and from Ganga Talao

Activities	Overall percentage of those who participated in each activity (%)
Fast (e.g. avoid eating meat products)	97.8
Carry religious (Pooja) items	95.9
Listen to religious songs (e.g. on radio)	85.4
Make a donation to one or more religious organisation(s)	85.4
Call out God's name (e.g. Bham Bham Bholey, Om Namah Shivaya)	82.3
Make use of the en-route facilities (e.g. free food and drink distribution)	78.2
Wear white clothes as a sign of purification	69.4
Sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)	59.2
Carry a Kanwar	15.8

The results reveal that for the journey to and from the sacred site, a very large proportion, 97.8% of the respondents fasted. Conversely, the activity which was least undertaken was the carrying of a Kanwar, with only 15.8% of the respondents indicating their involvement in performing this activity. As this percentage is even less than the percentage of those building or helping to build the Kanwar during the preparation (see Table 5.15 in Section 5.3.2.1), the finding is that not everyone building or helping to build a Kanwar eventually carries the Kanwar.

5.3.3.2 *Activities carried out by male and female respondents during their journey*

A Chi-square test was carried out, for the religious activities undertaken by the male and female respondents during their journey. The results where the significant value was equal to or less than the alpha value of 0.05, are presented in Table 5.22.

Table 5.22: Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents as part of the journey to and from Ganga Talao – significant differences by gender

<i>Make use of the en-route facilities (e.g. free food and drink distribution)</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	171	83.0	151	73.3	322	78.2			
No	35	17.0	55	26.7	90	21.8			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	5.132	0.023	0.117
<i>Wear white clothes as a sign of purification</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	170	82.5	116	56.3	286	69.4			
No	36	17.5	90	43.7	126	30.6			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	32.115	0.000	0.284
<i>Carry a Kanwar</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	49	23.8	16	7.8	65	15.8			
No	157	76.2	190	92.2	347	84.2			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	18.705	0.000	0.220

For the three activities, the null hypothesis was rejected. As a result, the results indicate that there was a statistically significant difference by gender in terms of using en-route facilities ($\phi = 0.12$ showing a weak effect size), wearing white clothes ($\phi = 0.28$ showing a weak effect size) and carrying a Kanwar ($\phi = 0.22$ showing a weak effect size). These results reveal that the male respondents were more likely to undertake these three activities as part of the journey to and from Ganga Talao, compared to female respondents.

The results where the significant value was more than the alpha value of 0.05, are presented in Table 5.23. For these six activities, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no statistically significant difference by the gender of the respondents and the activities carried out as part of the journey to and from the sacred site. Therefore, both the males and females were equally likely to carry out these activities during their journey.

Table 5.23: Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents as part of the journey to and from Ganga Talao – no significant differences by gender

<i>Fast (e.g. avoid eating meat products)</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	204	99.0	199	96.6	403	97.8			
No	2	1.0	7	3.4	9	2.2			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	1.817	0.178	-

Table 5.23 (continued): Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents as part of the journey to and from Ganga Talao – no significant differences by gender

Carry religious (Pooja) items									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	195	94.7	200	97.1	395	95.9			
No	11	5.3	6	2.9	17	4.1			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.982	0.322	-
Listen to religious songs (e.g. on radio)									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	176	85.4	176	85.4	352	85.4			
No	30	14.6	30	14.6	60	14.6			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.000	1.000	-
Make a donation to one or more religious organisation(s)									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	180	87.4	172	83.5	352	85.4			
No	26	12.6	34	16.5	60	14.6			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.956	0.328	-
Call out God's name (e.g. Bham Bham Bholey, Om Namah Shivaya)									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	169	82.0	170	82.5	339	82.3			
No	37	18.0	36	17.5	73	17.7			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.000	1.000	-
Sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	121	58.7	123	59.7	244	59.2			
No	85	41.3	83	40.3	168	40.8			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.010	0.920	-

5.3.3.3 Hierarchy of the level of importance of the activities to the religious experiences of respondents as part of the journey to and from Ganga Talao

The respondents were asked to rate how important were each of twelve activities to the religious experiences during the journey to and from Ganga Talao. The question used a four-point Likert item rating scale (1 = very important to 4 = not important). The overall medians of the importance the respondents attached to each of these activities are presented in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24: Overall median based on the level of importance attached to each activity in terms of the religious experiences of the respondents during the journey to and from Ganga Talao

<i>Activities</i>	Overall Median Value
Following established religious behaviours (e.g. fasting).	1.00
Experiencing the sacred atmosphere.	1.00
Making one or more donations.	2.00
Listening to religious songs (e.g. on radio).	2.00
Taking part in the pilgrimage (i.e. walk) which is different from the usual religious activities.	2.00
Wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes.	2.00
Calling out God's name (e.g. Bham Bham Bholey).	2.00
Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).	2.00
Carrying religious (Pooja) items.	2.00
Visiting other temples en route to Ganga Talao.	2.00
Carrying a Kanwar.	3.00
Making use of en-route services (e.g. free food and drink distribution).	3.00

Table 5.24 reveals that of the twelve activities, two were ‘Very important’, as indicated by an overall median value of 1.00, eight were ‘Important’, denoted by an overall median value of 2.00, and two were ranked as ‘Less important’, given by the overall median value of 3.00.

The respondents most commonly identified following established religious behaviours such as fasting and experiencing the sacred atmosphere along the way to and from Ganga Talao as being very important in contributing to their religious experiences during their journey. Fasting is a common devotional practice, starting from the preparation, all through the journey. It is not only a way for respondents to cleanse their body and mind but also a means to express their religious commitment and devotion towards God. Fasting can have both a physical and mental effect on the respondents. By contrast the sacred atmosphere is an intangible aspect of the Festival, which can have a psychological effect on respondents.

The respondents also considered other activities to be important, as denoted by a median of 2.00. For instance, the respondents rated ‘taking part in the pilgrimage (i.e. walk) which is different from the usual religious activities’ as important in contributing to the augmented religious experiences. The pilgrimage is the journey undertaken by participants regardless of whether they walk or use a means of transport. While a large proportion of respondents (51.7%) opted to use transport only, a smaller proportion of respondents went on foot only (28.2%) (see Table 5.5 in Section 5.2.3.2.1). Although the pilgrimage is a major component of the Festival, the walk itself was only seen as being important.

The median of 3.00 in Table 5.24 reveals that the respondents found these activities to be less important in contributing to their religious experiences during the journey. The results are consistent in that while the respondents rated ‘helping to build or building a Kanwar’ as less important during the preparation of the Festival (see Section 5.3.2.3), they also rated the carrying of

Kanwar as less important for the journey. The statement ‘making use of en-route services’ mostly relates to the social experiences of respondents, as opposed to contributing to their religious experiences. This may be why respondents rated this activity as less important.

5.3.3.4 The level of importance attached to each of the activities during the journey to and from Ganga Talao to the religious experiences of male and female respondents

For the same data as in Section 5.3.3.3 (twelve statements and the evaluation of their individual importance to the religious experiences during their journey to and from Ganga Talao), a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to establish if males and females evaluated the importance of the activities differently. The same four-point Likert item rating scale was used. Table 5.25 below show the results where there were statistically significant results by gender.

Table 5.25: The level of importance of activities to the religious experiences of respondents during the journey to and from Ganga Talao – significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Making one or more donations.	Male	201	2.00	188.57				
	Female	199	2.00	212.55				
	Total	400	2.00	-	17602.0	-2.241	0.025	0.11
Taking part in the pilgrimage (i.e. walk) which is different from the usual religious activities.	Male	203	2.00	186.52				
	Female	195	2.00	213.01				
	Total	398	2.00	-	17157.5	-2.456	0.014	0.12
Carrying a Kanwar.	Male	195	3.00	174.41				
	Female	183	3.00	205.58				
	Total	378	3.00	-	14900.0	-2.891	0.004	0.15

The Mann-Whitney U test showed that the null hypothesis was rejected where p was equal to or less than the alpha value of 0.05. This means there was a statistically significant difference by gender in terms of making donations (with a small effect size as $r = 0.11$), undertaking the walk during the pilgrimage (with a small effect size as $r = 0.12$) and carrying a Kanwar (with a small effect size as $r = 0.15$). In respect of these activities, the male respondents were more likely than female respondents to rank the activity higher in terms of importance as shown by the lower mean ranks.

The results for the remaining nine activities are presented in Table 5.26. For these activities, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that there was no statistically significant difference between males and females and the importance they assigned to these activities in contributing to their religious experiences as part of their journey.

Table 5.26: The level of importance of activities to the religious experiences of respondents during the journey to and from Ganga Talao – no significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Following established religious behaviours (e.g. fasting).	Male	206	1.00	199.67	19811.5	-1.263	0.207	-
	Female	205	1.00	212.36				
	Total	411	1.00	-				
Experiencing the sacred atmosphere.	Male	204	1.00	207.01	20703.5	-0.306	0.760	-
	Female	206	1.00	204.00				
	Total	410	1.00	-				
Carrying religious (Pooja) items.	Male	204	2.00	207.44	20411.5	-0.462	0.644	-
	Female	205	2.00	202.57				
	Total	409	2.00	-				
Wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes.	Male	204	2.00	195.04	18878.0	-1.839	0.066	-
	Female	205	2.00	214.91				
	Total	409	2.00	-				
Calling out God's name (e.g. Bham Bham Bholey).	Male	202	2.00	193.89	18663.5	-1.602	0.109	-
	Female	202	2.00	211.11				
	Total	404	2.00	-				
Listening to religious songs (e.g. on radio).	Male	202	2.00	196.84	19259.5	-0.966	0.334	-
	Female	201	2.00	207.18				
	Total	403	2.00	-				
Making use of en-route services (e.g. free food and drink distribution).	Male	202	3.00	191.29	18138.0	-1.764	0.078	-
	Female	199	3.00	210.85				
	Total	401	3.00	-				
Visiting other temples en route to Ganga Talao.	Male	198	2.00	192.78	18469.0	-0.695	0.487	-
	Female	194	2.00	200.30				
	Total	392	2.00	-				
Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).	Male	193	2.00	188.12	17585.5	-0.549	0.583	-
	Female	188	2.00	193.96				
	Total	381	2.00	-				

5.3.3.5 Religious experiences which the respondents missed out on by not walking to and from Ganga Talao

Those respondents who chose ‘using transport only’ and ‘both foot and using transport’ to travel to and/or from Ganga Talao (see Table 5.5 in Section 5.2.3.2.1), were asked to state what they felt they missed out on in terms of the most important contribution that walking would have made to their religious experiences. The data provided by the respondents were categorised into five

answers as illustrated in Table 5.27. Only one-fifth felt that they did not miss out on anything as the experiences were similar.

Table 5.27: Religious experience that respondents missed out by not undertaking walk by gender

<i>Missed out by using transport</i>	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Making a personal sacrifice	35	32.7	47	34.1	82	33.5
Nothing – Experiences were similar	19	17.8	32	23.2	51	20.8
Experiencing the atmosphere along the pilgrimage route	14	13.1	26	18.8	40	16.3
Carrying out religious duty	23	21.5	15	10.9	38	15.5
Social experiences	16	15.0	18	13.0	34	13.9
Total	107	100.0	138	100.0	245	100.0
<i>Chi-square Value: 6.656 df: 4 p: 0.155</i>						

Overall, most of the respondents, except for the 20.8% who identified ‘nothing and considered their experiences as being similar’, thought they had missed on certain experiences. The Chi-square analysis shows that there was no difference in the answers by gender: the p value is more than 0.05 and therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

5.3.4 The visit to Ganga Talao

5.3.4.1 Hierarchy based on the percentage of the activities undertaken by respondents during their visit to Ganga Talao

The respondents were asked to state from a list of fourteen activities what they did during their visit to Ganga Talao for the Festival. Table 5.28 sets out the overall percentages for having undertaken each of the fourteen activities. These activities are arranged from the most frequent activity carried out by respondents to the least frequent activity undertaken.

Table 5.28: Overall percentage of respondents undertaking each of the activities during their visit to Ganga Talao

<i>Activities</i>	Overall percentage of those who participated in each activity (%)
Collect the sacred water from the lake	98.8
Make an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) at the lake	98.8
Offer Bel Patra to Lord Shiva in the temple	95.6
Fast	95.6
Listen to religious songs (e.g. being played on the speaker)	93.7
Attend worship in one of the temples at Ganga Talao	91.5
Pray with other devotees (e.g. performing ‘Aarti’ together with other devotees)	89.1
Make a donation to the temple(s)	88.6
Undertake personal prayer	84.0
Wear white clothes as a sign of purification	71.1

Table 5.28 (continued): Overall percentage of respondents undertaking each of the activities during their visit to Ganga Talao

Activities	Overall percentage of those who participated in each activity (%)
Receive any blessings from one of the Priests	68.9
Sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)	55.6
Purchase any items (e.g. religious books, statue of deities) at Ganga Talao	51.9
Attend cultural activities (e.g. religious songs, plays and speeches) at Ganga Talao	48.3

The results show that most of the respondents, 98.8%, collected the sacred water and made offerings at the lake. The purpose of the visit to the sacred site is mainly to collect the sacred water so as to use it for prayers at the temples at Ganga Talao and/or for the Char Pahar ki Pooja. In addition to collecting the water, the respondents also prayed at the lake, which involves making offerings there. In contrast, the activity that was carried out the least at the site was attending cultural activities. Less than half of the respondents did not attend the cultural activities provided during the Festival at the sacred site.

5.3.4.2 Activities carried out by male and female respondents during their visit to Ganga Talao

A Chi-square test was conducted for the religious activities carried out during the respondents' visit to Ganga Talao. The results, showing significant difference by gender and the level of participation in activities undertaken at Ganga Talao, are shown in Table 5.29.

Table 5.29: Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents at Ganga Talao – significant differences by gender

Fast										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	N	%	N	%	N	%	χ^2	p	V	p
Yes	192	93.2	202	98.1	394	95.6				
No	14	6.8	4	1.9	18	4.4				
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	4.706	0.030	0.119	0.016
Wear white clothes as a sign of purification										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	N	%	N	%	N	%	χ^2	p	V	p
Yes	175	85.0	118	57.3	293	71.1				
No	31	15.0	88	42.7	119	28.9				
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	37.056	0.000	0.305	0.000
Attend cultural activities (e.g. religious songs, plays and speeches) at Ganga Talao										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	N	%	N	%	N	%	χ^2	p	V	p
Yes	111	53.9	88	42.7	199	48.3				
No	95	46.1	118	57.3	213	51.7				
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	4.704	0.030	0.112	0.023

There were statistically significant differences by the gender of the respondents, in terms of three activities carried out at Ganga Talao, namely fasting ($\phi = 0.12$ showing a weak effect size), wearing white clothes ($\phi = 0.31$ showing a medium effect size) and attending cultural activities ($\phi = 0.11$ showing a weak effect size). While female respondents were more likely to fast than male respondents, the male respondents were more likely to wear white clothes and attend cultural activities.

Table 5.30 shows the results where there were no significant differences by gender regarding the religious activities they carried out during the respondents' visit to Ganga Talao.

Table 5.30: Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents at Ganga Talao – no significant differences by gender

Collect the sacred water from the lake										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	202	98.1	205	99.5	407	98.8				
No	4	1.9	1	0.5	5	1.2				
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.810	0.368	-	-
Make an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) at the lake										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	204	99.0	203	98.5	407	98.8				
No	2	1.0	3	1.5	5	1.2				
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.000	1.000	-	-
Offer Bel Patra to Lord Shiva in the temple										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	193	93.7	201	97.6	394	95.6				
No	13	6.3	5	2.4	18	4.4				
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	2.847	0.092	-	-
Listen to religious songs (e.g. being played on the speaker)										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	196	95.1	190	92.2	386	93.7				
No	10	4.9	16	7.8	26	6.3				
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	1.026	0.311	-	-
Attend worship in one of the temples at Ganga Talao										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	190	92.2	187	90.8	377	91.5				
No	16	7.8	19	9.2	35	8.5				
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.125	0.724	-	-

Table 5.30 (continued): Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents at Ganga Talao – no significant differences by gender

<i>Pray with other devotees (e.g. performing 'Aarti' together with other devotees)</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	182	88.3	185	89.8	367	89.1			
No	24	11.7	21	10.2	45	10.9			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.1	0.752	-
<i>Make a donation to the temple(s)</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	186	90.3	179	86.9	365	88.6			
No	20	9.7	27	13.1	47	11.4			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.865	0.352	-
<i>Undertake personal prayer</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	180	87.4	166	80.6	346	84.0			
No	26	12.6	40	19.4	66	16.0			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	3.049	0.081	-
<i>Receive any blessings from one of the Priests</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	142	68.9	142	68.9	284	68.9			
No	64	31.1	64	31.1	128	31.1			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.000	1.000	-
<i>Sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	118	57.3	111	53.9	229	55.6			
No	88	42.7	95	46.1	183	44.4			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.354	0.552	-
<i>Purchase any items (e.g. religious books, statue of deities) at Ganga Talao</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	108	52.4	106	51.5	214	51.9			
No	98	47.6	100	48.5	198	48.1			
Total	206	100.0	206	100.0	412	100.0	0.010	0.921	-

The males and females shared similar practices regarding the remaining eleven activities during their last visit to Ganga Talao for the Festival. For these activities, the null hypothesis was not rejected as there was no statistically significant difference by genders and their likelihood to undertake these activities at the site for the Festival. Both males and females carry out activities at Ganga Talao that may potentially influence and/or reinforce their disposition, identity and religious belief.

5.3.4.3 *Hierarchy of the level of importance attached to activities during the visit to Ganga Talao to the religious experiences of respondents*

The overall median ranking, of the respondents' level of importance attached to fourteen activities of their religious experiences during their visit at the sacred site, based on a four-point Likert item rating scale are presented in Table 5.31.

Table 5.31: Overall median based on the level of importance attached to each activity in terms of the religious experiences of respondents during the visit to Ganga Talao	
Activities	Overall Median Value
Making an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) at the lakeside.	1.00
Collecting the sacred water from Ganga Talao.	1.00
Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying, fasting).	1.00
The sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, incense sticks burning).	1.00
The sacred environment (e.g. the temples, the sacred water, cool temperature) at Ganga Talao.	1.00
Praying together with other devotees.	2.00
Wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes.	2.00
Receiving blessings from the priest(s).	2.00
Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).	2.00
Visiting different temples at Ganga Talao.	2.00
Listening to religious songs.	2.00
Experiencing the hospitality of other Hindus who provided free food and drink at Ganga Talao.	2.00
Getting close to the 108 feet Lord Shiva statue (Mangal Mahadev) at Ganga Talao.	2.00
Attending cultural activities (e.g. religious speeches).	3.00

The results, in Table 5.31, show the importance attached to each of the religious activities. The respondents identified five activities as 'Very important', indicated by an overall median value of 1.00, eight activities were 'Important', as shown by the overall median value of 2.00, and one activity was 'Less important', as revealed by the overall median value of 3.00.

Making an offering at the lake, collecting the sacred water and praying were the 'core' devotional practices which were rated as very important. By undertaking these devotional practices, the respondents are fulfilling their religious commitment. Two other activities undertaken during the visit to Ganga Talao were also rated as very important: 'the sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, incense sticks burning)' and 'the sacred environment (e.g. the temples, the sacred water, cool temperature) at Ganga Talao'. These are part of the physical environment at the sacred site. This means that these physical aspects were very important for the religious experience of respondents when visiting Ganga Talao.

The results show that the activities which were rated as important in contributing to their religious experiences at the site, are similar to the journey to and from the sacred site in terms of the wearing

of traditional clothes, the visiting of temples and the singing and listening to religious songs (see Section 5.3.3.3). Praying alongside other participants and experiencing the hospitality of others were also rated as important at the site. These were social activities which contributed to the respondents' religious experiences. Although, getting close to the statue and receiving blessings could only be experienced at the site, the respondents thought that these were only 'important' to their religious experiences.

As for attending cultural activities, the respondents rated those activities as less important to their religious experiences. The cultural activities included religious preaching and cultural shows performed to entertain the participants during their visit at the site.

5.3.4.4 The level of importance of the activities during the visit to Ganga Talao component to the religious experiences of male and female respondents

The respondents were asked to state how important each of fourteen activities were to their religious experiences at Ganga Talao during the Festival. A Mann-Whitney U test was used to explore the difference between male and female respondents and the level of importance they attached to each of the activities. The activity for which there was significant difference by gender can be found in Table 5.32.

Table 5.32: The level of importance of the activities during the visit to Ganga Talao to the religious experiences of male and female respondents – significant differences by gender

Activity	Gender	N	Median	Mean Rank	U	z	p	r
Experiencing the hospitality of other Hindus who provided free food and drink at Ganga Talao.	Male	202	2.00	185.20	16906.5	-2.664	0.008	0.13
	Female	196	2.00	214.24				
	Total	398	2.00	-				

The Mann-Whitney U test reveals that of the fourteen activities, there was a statistically significant difference between males and females and the level of importance they attached to 'experiencing the hospitality of other Hindus who provided free food and drink at Ganga Talao' ($p = 0.008$ with a small effect size) with males attaching more importance than the females. So, the null hypothesis was rejected. As a higher proportion 57.2% (118) of male respondents travelled 'on foot only' and a combination of foot and transport for their journey to and from Ganga Talao, compared to 39.3% (81) female respondents (see Table 5.5 in Section 5.2.3.2.1), it is expected that they may need the free food and drink at the sacred site when they are resting, especially because they would not tend to carry these items if they walked to the site. This tallies with the current result that they are likely to attach more importance to the provision of these services, compared to female respondents.

The results for the remaining thirteen activities are found at Table 5.33. For these activities, there was no statistically significant difference by the gender in relation to these activities: the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that both genders were likely to attribute the same level of importance to these thirteen activities as part of their visit to Ganga Talao.

Table 5.33: The level of importance of the activities during the visit to Ganga Talao to the religious experiences of male and female respondents – no significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Making an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) at the lakeside.	Male	206	1.00	205.40	20991.0	-0.115	0.908	-
	Female	205	1.00	206.60				
	Total	411	1.00	-				
Collecting the sacred water from Ganga Talao.	Male	205	1.00	200.93	20075.0	-1.204	0.229	-
	Female	206	1.00	211.05				
	Total	411	1.00	-				
The sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, incense sticks burning).	Male	204	1.00	203.75	20654.0	-0.341	0.733	-
	Female	206	1.00	207.24				
	Total	410	1.00	-				
The sacred environment (e.g. the temples, the sacred water, cool temperature) at Ganga Talao.	Male	206	1.00	205.97	20914.5	-0.094	0.925	-
	Female	204	1.00	205.02				
	Total	410	1.00	-				
Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying, fasting).	Male	206	1.00	201.99	20288.5	-0.689	0.491	-
	Female	204	1.00	209.05				
	Total	410	1.00	-				
Praying together with other devotees.	Male	203	2.00	202.25	20350.5	-0.137	0.891	-
	Female	202	2.00	203.75				
	Total	405	2.00	-				
Wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes.	Male	202	2.00	199.82	19860.5	-0.595	0.552	-
	Female	203	2.00	206.17				
	Total	405	2.00	-				
Visiting different temples at Ganga Talao.	Male	204	2.00	194.19	18704.5	-1.461	0.144	-
	Female	199	2.00	210.01				
	Total	403	2.00	-				
Getting close to the 108 feet Lord Shiva statue (Mangal Mahadev) at Ganga Talao.	Male	204	2.00	201.69	20235.0	-0.057	0.954	-
	Female	199	2.00	202.32				
	Total	403	2.00	-				

Table 5.33 (continued): The level of importance of the activities during the visit to Ganga Talao to the religious experiences of male and female respondents – no significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Listening to religious songs.	Male	199	2.00	200.68	19765.0	-0.128	0.898	-
	Female	200	2.00	199.33				
	Total	399	2.00	-				
Receiving blessings from the priest(s).	Male	199	2.00	194.74	18854.0	-0.144	0.886	-
	Female	191	2.00	196.29				
	Total	390	2.00	-				
Attending cultural activities (e.g. religious speeches).	Male	200	2.50	188.53	17605.0	-1.302	0.193	-
	Female	190	3.00	202.84				
	Total	390	3.00	-				
Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).	Male	194	2.00	191.33	18202.5	-0.495	0.621	-
	Female	193	2.00	196.69				
	Total	387	2.00	-				

5.3.5 The Char Pahar ki Pooja

5.3.5.1 Hierarchy based on the percentage of the activities carried out by respondents for the Char Pahar ki Pooja

Those who indicated that they attended the Char Pahar ki Pooja, the last time they participated in the Festival (see Table 5.10 in Section 5.2.3.4.1), were further asked to indicate which activities they carried out during these prayers. The overall view of the level of participation in each of the twelve activities carried out by the respondents during the Char Pahar Ki Pooja is shown in Table 5.34: this show the activities which respondents carried out the most to the least during the Char Pahar Ki Pooja.

Table 5.34: Overall percentage of respondents carrying out each of the activities during the Char Pahar ki Pooja

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Overall percentage of those who participated in each activity (%)</i>
Pour the sacred water on the Shivling	99.2
Fast	97.0
Offer Bel Patra to Lord Shiva in the temple	96.6
Pray with other devotees (e.g. recite mantras together with other devotees)	95.9
Make an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) to the Shivling	95.9
Listen to religious songs (e.g. being played on the speaker)	95.8
Make a donation to the temple	91.7
Undertake personal prayer	86.1
Sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)	83.5

Table 5.34 (continued): Overall percentage of respondents carrying out each of the activities during the Char Pahar ki Pooja

Activities	Overall percentage of those who participated in each activity (%)
Receive blessings from the Priest	83.1
Take part in the holy bath (bath the Shivling with yogurt, milk, etc.) of the Shivling	79.3
Wear white clothes as a sign of purification	57.1

Table 5.34 illustrates the activity that was the most frequently carried out was pouring the sacred water on Shivling, while the one that was least carried out was wearing of white clothes. The prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja are performed all-night, requiring respondents of Lord Shiva by pouring the water, previously collected from Ganga Talao, on the Shivling. Therefore, pouring the water is an essential part of the Festival, and without which the Char Pahar ki Pooja is not complete.

5.3.5.2 Activities carried out by male and female respondents for the Char Pahar ki Pooja

For the activities carried out by male and female respondents during the Char Pahar Ki Pooja, a Chi-square test was conducted. The responses determine what activities the male and female respondents participated in most during the Char Pahar Ki Pooja. The results, showing significant differences by gender, are indicated in Table 5.35.

Table 5.35: Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents during the Char Pahar ki Pooja – significant differences by gender

Undertake personal prayer										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	123	91.8	106	80.3	229	86.1				
No	11	8.2	26	19.7	37	13.9				
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	6.401	0.011	0.166	0.007
Wear white clothes as a sign of purification										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	103	76.9	49	37.1	152	57.1				
No	31	23.1	83	62.9	114	42.9				
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	41.283	0.000	0.402	0.000

The results show that the null hypothesis is rejected (alpha value of 0.05 or less) for two of the activities the respondents carried out as part of the Char Pahar ki Pooja: in personal prayer ($\phi = 0.17$ showing a weak effect size) and wearing white clothes ($\phi = 0.402$ showing a medium effect size). These denote that there are statistically significant differences between Hindu males and Hindu females and these activities undertaken during the Char Pahar ki Pooja, with the male respondents being more likely to undertake personal prayers and wear white during the Char Pahar ki Pooja, compared to the female respondents. Personal prayers were undertaken to seek for Lord

Shiva's blessings, as myths about praying to Lord Shiva on this night includes being cleansed from one's sins, receive rewards/blessing, amongst others. Wearing white clothes as a sign of purification was common for all components of the Festival, with male respondents more likely to wear white clothes than female respondents. The finding is that the male respondents wear white attire throughout the Festival.

Table 5.36 shows the results for the remaining ten activities carried out during the Char Pahar ki Pooja. For these activities, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that there is no statistically significant difference by gender in respect of the frequency participation by gender in terms of these activities during the Char Pahar ki Pooja. Therefore, the male and female respondents were equally likely to undertake these activities during the Char Pahar ki Pooja.

Table 5.36: Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents during the Char Pahar ki Pooja – no significant differences by gender

<i>Pour the sacred water on the Shivling</i>										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	133	99.3	131	99.2	264	99.2				
No	1	0.7	1	0.8	2	0.8				
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	0.000	1.000	-	-
<i>Fast</i>										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	129	96.3	129	97.7	258	97.0				
No	5	3.7	3	2.3	8	3.0				
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	0.114	0.736	-	-
<i>Offer Bel Patra to Lord Shiva in the temple</i>										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	129	96.3	128	97.0	257	96.6				
No	5	3.7	4	3.0	9	3.4				
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	0.000	1.000	-	-
<i>Pray with other devotees (e.g. recite mantras together with other devotees)</i>										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	129	96.3	126	95.5	255	95.9				
No	5	3.7	6	4.5	11	4.1				
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	0.001	0.980	-	-
<i>Make an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) to the Shivling</i>										
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	129	96.3	126	95.5	255	95.9				
No	5	3.7	6	4.5	11	4.1				
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	0.001	0.980	-	-

Table 5.36 (continued): Chi-square test based on the activities carried out by respondents during the Char Pahar ki Pooja – no significant differences by gender

<i>Listen to religious songs (e.g. being played on the speaker)</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	131	97.8	124	93.9	255	95.8			
No	3	2.2	8	6.1	11	4.1			
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	1.581	0.209	-
<i>Make a donation to the temple</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	127	94.8	117	88.6	244	91.7			
No	7	5.2	15	11.4	22	8.3			
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	2.544	0.111	-
<i>Sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	115	85.8	107	81.1	222	83.5			
No	19	14.2	25	18.9	44	16.5			
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	0.774	0.379	-
<i>Receive blessings from the Priest</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	115	85.8	106	80.3	221	83.1			
No	19	14.2	26	19.7	45	16.9			
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	1.075	0.300	-
<i>Take part in the holy bath (bath the Shivling with yogurt, milk, etc.) of the Shivling</i>									
	Male		Female		Total		Yates	A. Sig.	Cramer's
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>V</i>
Yes	105	78.4	106	80.3	211	79.3			
No	29	21.6	26	19.7	55	20.7			
Total	134	100.0	132	100.0	266	100.0	0.058	0.810	-

5.3.5.3 Hierarchy of the level of importance of activities to the religious experiences of respondents during the Char Pahar ki Pooja

The respondents were given a list of ten activities and they were asked how important each was to their religious experiences during the Char Pahar ki Pooja. The analysis of the level of importance was measured through a four-point Likert item rating scale. The overall median is presented in Table 5.37.

Table 5.37: Overall median based on the level of importance attached to each activity in relation to the religious experiences of the participants during the Char Pahar ki Pooja

<i>Activities</i>	Overall Median Value
Pouring the sacred water on the Shivling.	1.00
Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying, fasting).	1.00
Actively participating in the Char Pahar Ki Pooja (e.g. making offerings to the Shivling).	1.00
Being involved in the holy bath of the Shivling.	1.00
The sacred atmosphere (bell ringing, incense sticks burning).	1.00
Making a donation to the temple.	2.00
Receiving blessings from the priest.	2.00
Praying together with other devotees.	2.00
Listening to religious songs.	2.00
Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).	2.00

The respondents identified five activities as ‘Very important’, denoted by an overall median value of 1.00, and the other five activities as ‘Important’, as indicated by an overall median of 2.00. Those activities that were very important to the religious experiences of the respondents during the Char Pahar ki Pooja, relate mostly to the main purpose of the prayers, in terms of being there for Lord Shiva, offering items to the Shivling, bathing the Shivling with the sacred water previously collected from the Ganga Talao, and carrying out these actions in a sacred atmosphere. By contrast, the remaining activities were only seen to be important, as these were actions that resulted from the respondents’ attendance to the Char Pahar ki Pooja.

5.3.5.4 The level of importance of the activities during the Char Pahar ki Pooja to the religious experiences of male and female respondents

The respondents were asked to choose how important were each of ten activities to their religious experience during the prayers of the Char Pahar Ki Pooja. This was measured using a four-point Likert item rating scale. The result of the Mann-Whitney U test, where there is a significant difference by gender in relation to the activity carried out during the Char Pahar ki Pooja, is provided in Table 5.38.

Table 5.38: The level of importance of activities to the religious experiences of respondents during the Char Pahar ki Pooja – significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Receiving blessings from the priest.	Male	133	2.00	118.84	6895.0	-2.522	0.012	0.16
	Female	125	2.00	140.84				
	Total	258	2.00	-				

The result of the Mann-Whitney U test show that the null hypothesis is rejected for only one activity, ‘receiving blessings from the priest’ ($p = 0.012$ with a weak effect size). The result also reveal that the male respondents were more likely to find it important to receive blessings from

priests, than female respondents (as shown by the lower mean ranks). Receiving blessings can be construed as a means for the respondents to have a sense of accomplishment or fulfilment from participating in the Char Pahar ki Pooja.

The results for the level of importance of the remaining activities, during the Char Pahar ki Pooja, can be found at Table 5.39. There was no statistically significant difference by gender for these activities and therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected for the nine activities. Therefore, both males and females were likely to give equal importance to these nine activities in contributing to their religious experiences during the Char Pahar ki Pooja.

Table 5.39: The level of importance of activities to the religious experiences of respondents during the Char Pahar ki Pooja – no significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
The sacred atmosphere (bell ringing, incense sticks burning).	Male	134	1.00	129.72	8337.5	-0.918	0.358	-
	Female	132	1.00	137.34				
	Total	266	1.00	-				
Pouring the sacred water on the Shivling.	Male	134	1.00	131.94	8635.0	-0.533	0.594	-
	Female	132	1.00	135.08				
	Total	266	1.00	-				
Praying together with other devotees.	Male	134	2.00	127.28	8010.5	-1.332	0.183	-
	Female	131	2.00	138.85				
	Total	265	2.00	-				
Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying, fasting).	Male	133	1.00	126.68	7937.0	-1.507	0.132	-
	Female	131	1.00	138.41				
	Total	264	1.00	-				
Making a donation to the temple.	Male	134	2.00	127.96	8101.0	-1.061	0.289	-
	Female	130	2.00	137.18				
	Total	264	2.00	-				
Listening to religious songs.	Male	133	2.00	128.14	8131.0	-0.915	0.360	-
	Female	130	2.00	135.95				
	Total	263	2.00	-				
Actively participating in the Char Pahar Ki Pooja (e.g. making offerings to the Shivling).	Male	132	1.00	128.13	8135.0	-1.033	0.302	-
	Female	131	1.00	135.90				
	Total	263	1.00	-				
Being involved in the holy bath of the Shivling.	Male	132	1.00	131.43	8457.5	-0.108	0.914	-
	Female	129	1.00	130.56				
	Total	261	1.00	-				

Table 5.39 (continued): The level of importance of activities to the religious experiences of respondents during the Char Pahar ki Pooja – no significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).	Male	130	2.00	125.17				
	Female	128	2.00	133.90				
	Total	258	2.00	-	7756.5	-1.014	0.310	-

5.4 OVERALL EVALUATION OF PARTICIPATION IN THE FESTIVAL

5.4.1 Background

This sub-section consists of five parts which highlight the respondents' overall evaluation of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) during their last participation. It reviews the respondents' (a) personal feelings, (b) emotions and (c) existential 'social' opportunities, generated by their most recent participation in the Festival. This is then followed by the level of importance the respondents attributed to the evaluation of the 'self' for participating in the Festival and lastly to their religious experiences while taking part in the Festival.

5.4.2 Personal feelings for participating in the Festival

5.4.2.1 *Hierarchy of the personal feelings resulting from participation of the respondents in the Festival*

The respondents were provided with a statement and were asked to substitute a set of words to complete the sentence that closely matched their personal feelings the last time they participated in the Festival. A five-point Likert item rating scale was used with the options '(1) Not at all, (2) A little, (3) Moderately, (4) Quite a bit and (5) Entirely'. This evaluation of the sentences assists in identifying the 'core' religious benefits gained by the respondents through their participation in the Festival. It assesses the *core religious experiences* offered by the Festival to the respondents. A median ranking score analysis for the sixteen statements is given in Table 5.40.

Table 5.40: Overall median based on the set of words relating to the personal feelings of respondents for participating in the Festival

<i>The last time I participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival I felt that I had...</i>	<i>Overall Median Value</i>
Attained personal salvation (liberation)	4.00
Made a personal sacrifice	4.00
Increased my self-knowledge	4.00
Renewed spiritually	4.00

Table 5.40 (continued): Overall median based on the set of words relating to the personal feelings of respondents for participating in the Festival

<i>The last time I participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival I felt that I had...</i>	Overall Median Value
Experienced self-renewal	4.00
Attained self-fulfilment	4.00
Been purified (through rituals)	4.00
Re-affirmed my faith and belief	4.00
Been freed from social barriers	4.00
Been freed from daily routine life/pressures	4.00
The opportunity to socialise	4.00
A sense of community pride and spirit	4.00
Bonded more with my family members and/or friends	4.00
Confirmed my Hindu identity	4.00
Found meaning in my life	3.00
Gone through hardship for my faith	3.00

Of the sixteen statements on personal feelings experienced by the respondents, fourteen were acknowledged as being ‘quite a bit’ as indicated by an overall median value of 4.00, denoting relatively strong personal feelings. This indicates that the ‘core’ existential feelings the respondents gained from participating in the Festival was more than religious in nature, as they also benefitted from both social and liminal experiences. The sets of words relating to experiencing liminality were ‘been freed from social barriers’ and ‘been freed from daily routine life/pressures’ as part of their participation in the Festival. The four last sets of words in Table 5.40 trigger social experiences for the respondents.

The respondents rated their personal feelings for ‘found meaning in my life’ and ‘gone through hardship for my faith’ as ‘moderately’ matching their personal feelings about participation in the Festival – an overall median value of 3.00. Finding meaning in one’s life is related to the doctrinal and philosophical dimension, as indicated in Section 2.2.2, of the nature of Hindu religion. This means that the respondents partially felt that their participation in the Festival acted as a guide for their life. Additionally, by denoting moderate for ‘gone through hardship for my faith’, the respondents were indicating that the level of hardship they undertook for the Festival was only average.

5.4.2.2 The level of personal feelings of male and female respondents resulting from their last participation in the Festival

The Mann-Whitney U test was performed on the sixteen sets of personal feelings to explore whether there were differences between male and female respondents in terms of their personal feelings during their participation in the Festival. The results, showing significant differences by gender, are presented in Table 5.41.

Table 5.41: The level of personal feelings resulting from the participation of respondents in the Festival – significant differences by gender

<i>Personal feelings</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
The opportunity to socialise	Male	206	4.00	220.00				
	Female	206	3.00	193.00				
	Total	412	4.00	-	18438.0	-2.366	0.018	0.12
Made a personal sacrifice	Male	206	4.00	217.71				
	Female	206	4.00	195.29				
	Total	412	4.00	-	18908.5	-1.980	0.048	0.10
A sense of community pride and spirit	Male	206	4.00	219.25				
	Female	206	4.00	193.75				
	Total	412	4.00	-	18592.0	-2.255	0.024	0.11
Confirmed my Hindu identity	Male	206	5.00	218.74				
	Female	206	4.00	194.26				
	Total	412	4.00	-	18696.0	-2.231	0.026	0.11

The findings of the Mann-Whitney U tests show that the null hypothesis is rejected for only four statements, where p is less than 0.05. This indicates that there are statistically significant difference by gender of respondent and the personal feelings attached to participating in the Festival in terms of the respondents' opportunity to socialise (a weak effect size $r = 0.12$), making a personal sacrifice (a weak effect size $r = 0.10$), feeling a sense of community pride and spirit (a weak effect size $r = 0.11$) and confirming their Hindu identity (a weak effect size $r = 0.11$). For these four statements related to personal feelings, the mean rank value was higher for the male respondents indicating that they were more likely to experience higher personal feelings than female respondents.

The level of personal feelings resulting from the participation of respondents in the Festival, showing no significant differences by gender, is found at Table 5.42.

Table 5.42: The level of personal feelings resulting from the participation of respondents in the Festival – no significant differences by gender

<i>Personal feelings</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Found meaning in my life	Male	206	3.00	207.28				
	Female	206	3.00	205.72				
	Total	412	3.00	-	21057.5	-0.136	0.892	-
Gone through hardship for my faith	Male	206	3.00	214.75				
	Female	206	3.00	198.25				
	Total	412	3.00	-	19518.5	-1.441	0.150	-

Table 5.42 (continued): The level of personal feelings resulting from the participation of respondents in the Festival – no significant differences by gender

<i>Personal feelings</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Been freed from social barriers	Male	206	3.00	204.16	20735.0	-0.409	0.682	-
	Female	206	4.00	208.84				
	Total	412	4.00	-				
Attained personal salvation (liberation)	Male	206	3.00	201.31	20148.0	-0.908	0.364	-
	Female	206	4.00	211.69				
	Total	412	4.00	-				
Been freed from daily routine life/pressures	Male	206	4.00	208.53	20799.0	-0.368	0.713	-
	Female	206	4.00	204.47				
	Total	412	4.00	-				
Increased my self-knowledge	Male	206	4.00	201.65	20218.0	-0.853	0.393	-
	Female	206	4.00	211.35				
	Total	412	4.00	-				
Renewed spiritually	Male	206	4.00	211.64	20159.5	-0.911	0.363	-
	Female	206	4.00	201.36				
	Total	412	4.00	-				
Experienced self-renewal	Male	206	4.00	210.74	20344.5	-0.745	0.456	-
	Female	206	4.00	202.26				
	Total	412	4.00	-				
Attained self-fulfilment	Male	206	4.00	202.21	20334.0	-0.762	0.446	-
	Female	206	4.00	210.79				
	Total	412	4.00	-				
Been purified (through rituals)	Male	206	4.00	214.76	19516.5	-1.464	0.143	-
	Female	206	4.00	198.24				
	Total	412	4.00	-				
Bonded more with my family members and/or friends	Male	206	4.00	215.86	19290.5	-1.671	0.095	-
	Female	206	4.00	197.14				
	Total	412	4.00	-				
Re-affirmed my faith and belief	Male	206	5.00	217.26	19000.5	-1.943	0.052	-
	Female	206	4.00	195.74				
	Total	412	4.00	-				

For the remaining twelve sets of personal words denoting the respondents' personal feelings, the null hypothesis is not rejected. There was no statistically significant difference by gender in terms of the personal feelings attached to participating in the Festival.

5.4.3 The emotional responses of respondents resulting from participating in the Festival

5.4.3.1 *Hierarchy of personal emotions of the respondents generated by their participation in the Festival*

The respondents were asked how they would describe their emotions the last time they participated in the Festival. A five-point semantic differential scale was used to measure their emotions, consisting of a series of bi-polar emotions, for example 'I felt happy v/s I felt sad'. The five-point scale was used between the pairs of words. The respondents were required to mark with an 'X' the box which most closely matched how they felt as a participant in the Festival. The closer they marked the 'X' to the description, the more likely they thought the description applied. Each pair of descriptions was allocated a value between 1 (the words on the left) and 5 (the words on the right). The evaluation of the emotional outcomes of the respondents gives an indication as to how their needs were fulfilled by participating in the Festival. These essentially help in shaping their religious experiences. Table 5.43 gives the overall median rank of each pairs of emotional outcome of the respondents the last time they participated in the Festival.

Table 5.43: Overall median based on the emotional outcomes during the Festival

<i>Emotions</i>	Overall Median Value
I had a clear focus v/s I had no clear	1.00
I was excited v/s I was bored	1.00
I was proud to participate v/s I was ashamed to participate	1.00
I had a positive experience v/s I had a negative experience	1.00
I felt relaxed v/s I was stressed	1.00
I felt inspired v/s I felt uninspired	1.00
I felt rewarded v/s I felt disappointed	1.00
I felt refreshed v/s I felt tired	1.00
I felt happy v/s I felt sad	1.00

Table 5.43 indicates that the respondents had very positive emotions the last time they participated in the Festival as the median is 1.00 in each case. Therefore, these positive emotions are likely to influence their religious experiences in a positive manner. An overall positive emotion also shows that respondents' needs were met and they were satisfied. As a result, their emotions may have an influence on their future attachment to and participation in the Festival.

5.4.3.2 *The level of emotions of male and female respondents during their last participation in the Festival*

The results of the Mann Whitney U test showing significant differences in the respondents' emotions generated through participation in the Festival by gender are given in Table 5.44.

Table 5.44: Emotional outcomes of respondents during their last participation – significant differences by gender

<i>Emotions</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
I was excited v/s I was bored	Male	206	1.00	218.72	18701.5	-2.385	0.017	0.12
	Female	206	1.00	194.28				
	Total	412	1.00	-				
I felt refreshed v/s I felt tired	Male	206	1.00	221.31	18168.0	-3.047	0.002	0.15
	Female	206	1.00	191.69				
	Total	412	1.00	-				

The null hypothesis is rejected for two pairs of emotions, ‘I felt refreshed v/s I felt tired’ (weak effect size $r = 0.15$) and ‘I was excited v/s I was bored’ (weak effect size $r = 0.12$), as the p value is less than 0.05. This means that there was a statistically significant difference by gender and the level of emotions when participating in the Festival, with the lower mean rank score indicating that females are more likely to have stronger positive emotions compared to male respondents.

The results of the Mann Whitney U test for the remaining seven emotions generated through participation in the Festival by gender are given in Table 5.45. For these emotional outcomes, there were no statistically significant differences by gender in terms of the level of the emotions of the respondents. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This shows that both male and female respondents are likely to have similar strong positive emotional outcomes from participating in the Festival.

Table 5.45: Emotional outcomes of respondents during their last participation – no significant differences by gender

<i>Emotions</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
I had a clear focus v/s I had no clear	Male	206	1.00	215.36	19392.5	-1.804	0.071	-
	Female	206	1.00	197.64				
	Total	412	1.00	-				
I was proud to participate v/s I was ashamed to participate	Male	206	1.00	210.71	20350.5	-1.058	0.290	-
	Female	206	1.00	202.29				
	Total	412	1.00	-				
I had a positive experience v/s I had a negative experience	Male	206	1.00	210.85	20322.0	-1.110	0.267	-
	Female	206	1.00	202.15				
	Total	412	1.00	-				
I felt relaxed v/s I was stressed	Male	206	1.00	214.28	19616.0	-1.649	0.099	-
	Female	206	1.00	198.72				
	Total	412	1.00	-				

Table 5.45 (continued): Emotional outcomes of respondents during their last participation – no significant differences by gender

<i>Emotions</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
I felt inspired v/s I felt uninspired	Male	206	1.00	213.26				
	Female	206	1.00	199.74				
	Total	412	1.00	-	19825.0	-1.472	0.141	-
I felt rewarded v/s I felt disappointed	Male	206	1.00	215.19				
	Female	206	1.00	197.81				
	Total	412	1.00	-	19427.5	-1.668	0.095	-
I felt happy v/s I felt sad	Male	206	1.00	210.15				
	Female	206	1.00	202.85				
	Total	412	1.00	-	20466.5	-0.912	0.362	-

5.4.4 Personal ‘social’ opportunities provided by participating in the Festival

5.4.4.1 Hierarchy of the level of importance attached to each personal ‘social’ opportunity offered by the Festival

The respondents were provided with a statement and a list of nine sets of words. They were asked to complete the sentence “The last time I participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival I had the opportunity to ...” using the statements shown in Table 5.46. For each completed sentence they were then asked to assess the level of importance for each opportunity described using a four-point Likert item rating scale with ‘1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Less Important and 4=Not Important’. These help to evaluate the importance given by respondents to the personal ‘social’ opportunities generated by the participation in the Festival.

Table 5.46: Overall median based on the level of importance attached to personal ‘social’ opportunities provided by participation in the Festival

<i>The last time I participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival I had the opportunity to...</i>	<i>Overall Median Value</i>
Be together with my family and/or friends.	1.00
Move from the ordinary to the extraordinary in terms of my religious observance.	2.00
Meet and interact with other devotees/pilgrims.	2.00
Share an equal social status with other devotees.	2.00
Express my Hindu culture and identity.	2.00
Be free from my daily routine life.	2.00
Perform special acts of worship.	2.00
Have a shared experience (e.g. praying with other devotees).	2.00
Interact with the priests (Pandits).	2.00

The results indicate that the respondents thought that the last time they participated in the Festival, the opportunity to ‘be together with my family and/or friends’ was very important as indicated through an overall median value of 1.00, while the rest of the eight sets of words were ranked as important, denoted by an overall median value of 2.00. The median value of 2.00 denotes that the personal ‘social’ opportunity was ‘Important’ to the respondents. Altogether all the nine statements indicate that the respondents had the opportunity to be involved in social activities that give rise to social experiences during the Festival.

5.4.4.2 The level of importance attached to personal ‘social’ opportunities provided by the Festival by gender

A Mann Whitney U test was conducted to investigate whether there were differences between male and female respondents and the level of importance of the existential social opportunities provided by participation in the Festival. The results for significant differences by gender can be found in Table 5.47.

Table 5.47: The level of importance of personal ‘social’ opportunities provided by participation in the Festival – significant differences by gender								
<i>Personal ‘social’ opportunities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Share an equal social status with other devotees.	Male	201	2.00	189.06	17699.5	-2.183	0.029	0.11
	Female	200	2.00	213.00				
	Total	401	2.00	-				
Express my Hindu culture and identity.	Male	202	2.00	185.22	16911.5	-2.754	0.006	0.14
	Female	197	2.00	215.15				
	Total	399	2.00	-				
Interact with the priests (Pandits).	Male	196	2.00	183.74	16708.0	-2.074	0.038	0.11
	Female	193	3.00	206.43				
	Total	389	2.00	-				

The personal ‘social’ opportunities analysis revealed that three statements resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis: ‘sharing equal social status with other devotees’ ($p = 0.03$ a weak effect size $r = 0.11$), ‘expressing the Hindu culture and identity’ ($p = 0.006$ a weak effect size $r = 0.14$) and ‘interacting with the priests’ ($p = 0.038$ a weak effect size $r = 0.11$). There were statistically significant differences by gender and these three personal ‘social’ opportunities provided by participating in the Festival. The lower mean rank score indicates that males were more likely to agree with the three statements than female respondents.

The results of male and female respondents regarding the remaining six personal ‘social’ opportunities can be found in Table 5.48. For these six statements, there was no statistically significant difference by gender in relation to the personal ‘social’ opportunities provided by

participating in the Festival. The null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that both male and female respondents are likely to attach similar importance to the personal ‘social’ opportunities for the Festival.

Table 5.48: The level of importance of personal ‘social’ opportunities provided by participation in the Festival – no significant differences by gender

Personal ‘social’ opportunities	Gender	N	Median	Mean Rank	U	z	p	r
Be together with my family and/or friends.	Male	204	1.00	203.40	20583.0	-0.212	0.832	-
	Female	204	2.00	205.60				
	Total	408	1.00	-				
Be free from my daily routine life.	Male	205	2.00	205.03	20083.0	-0.379	0.705	-
	Female	200	2.00	200.92				
	Total	405	2.00	-				
Meet and interact with other devotees/pilgrims.	Male	202	2.00	194.99	18884.5	-1.301	0.193	-
	Female	201	2.00	209.05				
	Total	403	2.00	-				
Perform special acts of worship.	Male	203	2.00	198.07	19501.5	-0.561	0.575	-
	Female	198	2.00	204.01				
	Total	401	2.00	-				
Have a shared experience (e.g. praying with other devotees).	Male	200	2.00	199.44	19787.0	-0.287	0.774	-
	Female	201	2.00	202.56				
	Total	401	2.00	-				
Move from the ordinary to the extraordinary in terms of my religious observance.	Male	199	2.00	192.76	18460.0	-0.616	0.538	-
	Female	192	2.00	199.35				
	Total	391	2.00	-				

5.4.5 Opportunity to evaluate oneself through participating in the Festival

5.4.5.1 Hierarchy of the level of importance attached to self-evaluation during participation in the Festival

The respondents were asked to state the level of importance of the opportunities to evaluate the ‘self’ during the Festival. There were six different statements with the evaluation based on a four-point Likert item scale: ‘1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Less Important and 4=Not Important’. The evaluation of these statements helps in understanding how the participants felt in terms of the ‘self’ while participating in the Festival, which has a bearing on the participants’ existential

religious experiences. Table 5.49 shows the results of the median ranking score analysis on the level of importance of self-evaluation opportunities for participating in the Festival.

Table 5.49: Overall median based on the level of importance attached to opportunities to evaluate the 'self' when participating in the Festival

<i>Personal opportunities</i>	Overall Median Value
Having the opportunity to focus and meditate on God(s).	1.00
Having the time to better understand my inner self.	2.00
Having the opportunity to strengthen my belief.	2.00
Having the time to reflect on my personal religious values and life.	2.00
Having the opportunity to make donations.	2.00
Undertaking acts of self-penance (e.g. not eating meat products, experiencing fatigue and hardship).	2.00

The results show that 'having the opportunity to focus and meditate on God(s)' was 'Very important', revealed by an overall median value of 1.00. This indicates that when the respondents participated in the Festival, it provided them with time to undertake religious activities so as not only to pay reverence to Lord Shiva but also feel connected to Him by carrying out meditation during the Festival. The remaining statements were seen as important, as indicated by the overall median value of 2.00. These opportunities were therefore an occasion for respondents to discover themselves through their participation in the Festival.

5.4.5.2 The level of importance attached to self-evaluation opportunities by male and female respondents during participation in the Festival

The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted on the level of importance of the personal opportunities, to evaluate 'self', provided through participation in the Festival. The result for the level of importance of self-evaluation opportunities, showing significant difference by gender, is presented in Table 5.50. The results indicate that there was a statistically significant difference by gender in relation to the level of importance of self-evaluation opportunities when participating in the Festival for only one statement: 'having the time to reflect on my personal religious values and life' ($p = 0.022$ with a weak effect size $r = 0.11$). The null hypothesis was rejected for this statement. The lower mean rank for Hindu males 'having the time to reflect on my personal religious values and life' was more important for them than for Hindu females.

Table 5.50: The level of importance of self-evaluation opportunities – significant differences by gender

<i>Self-evaluation opportunities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Having the time to reflect on my personal religious values and life.	Male	203	2.00	189.69	17800.5	-2.285	0.022	0.11
	Female	199	2.00	213.55				
	Total	402	2.00	-				

The results for the Mann-Whitney U test for the remaining five self-evaluation opportunities are found at Table 5.51. The results indicate that the null hypothesis is not rejected: there is no statistically significant difference by gender in relation to the level of importance they attached to the personal self-evaluation opportunities provided through participation in the Festival. Therefore, for these statements, males and females attached similar level of importance to the personal self-evaluation opportunities provided by the Festival.

Table 5.51: The level of importance of self-evaluation opportunities – no significant differences by gender

Self-evaluation opportunities	Gender	N	Median	Mean Rank	U	z	p	r
Having the opportunity to focus and meditate on God(s).	Male	206	1.00	200.10	19899.0	-0.757	0.449	-
	Female	201	2.00	208.00				
	Total	407	1.00	-				
Having the opportunity to strengthen my belief.	Male	204	2.00	199.70	19828.5	-0.634	0.526	-
	Female	201	2.00	206.35				
	Total	405	2.00	-				
Having the time to better understand my inner self.	Male	203	2.00	199.57	19807.5	-0.465	0.642	-
	Female	200	2.00	204.46				
	Total	403	2.00	-				
Having the opportunity to make donations.	Male	198	2.00	197.58	19419.5	-0.535	0.592	-
	Female	202	2.00	203.36				
	Total	400	2.00	-				
Undertaking acts of self-penance (e.g. not eating meat products, experiencing fatigue and hardship).	Male	198	2.00	197.19	19342.5	-0.434	0.664	-
	Female	200	2.00	201.79				
	Total	398	2.00	-				

5.4.6 The personal evaluation of activities undertaken by respondents contributing to their religious experiences

5.4.6.1 Hierarchy of the level of importance attached to each statement in contributing to existential religious experiences

A list of seven activities was provided to respondents. They were required to indicate the level of importance they attached to each activity in terms of the contribution to their religious experiences during the Festival. For this analysis, a four-point Likert item rating scale was used '1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Less Important and 4=Not Important'. Table 5.52 presents the median ranking score analysis of the seven statements.

Table 5.52: Overall median based on the level of importance of activities in contributing to religious experiences

<i>Activities</i>	Overall Median Value
Fasting in preparation for, and during, the period of the Festival.	1.00
Following set rituals when collecting sacred water.	1.00
Worshipping in a temple at Ganga Talao.	1.00
Attending prayers and observing rituals for the Char Pahar Ki Pooja.	2.00
Taking part in the pilgrimage (walking).	2.00
Performing special acts of worship that were additional to your religious activities.	2.00
Carrying the Kanwar.	3.00

Overall, three activities were considered by the respondents to be very important, as indicated by an overall median value of 1.00, three activities were scored as important, as denoted by an overall median value of 2.00 and one activity was scored as less important, as revealed by an overall median value of 3.00, in contributing to the respondents' religious experiences. Fasting, performing rituals and worshipping are religious practices contributing to the *core religious experiences* during the Festival. Fasting is a process of purification involving personal sacrifice; it can be both a mental and physical process as respondents have the opportunity to cleanse themselves for their well-being by refraining and abstaining from normal practices and habits. Rituals and worshipping at Ganga Talao relate to the devotional practices whereby the respondents carry out 'core' activities in order to showcase or express their devotion pertaining to the Hindu religion. These devotional practices that respondents performed at the sacred site have symbolic significance. Although undertaking the walk, the prayers of Char Pahar ki Pooja and other special acts of worshipping for the Festival were religious practices that the respondents do not carry in their normal everyday routines, these were only seen as important in contributing to their religious experiences. In essence, these activities relate to augmented religious experiences. Lastly, carrying Kanwars for the Festival was identified by respondents to be less important in contributing to their religious experiences. This could be attributable to the fact that only a small number of participants carry the Kanwar as part of their journey. Therefore, it can be said that because a small number of participants carrying Kanwars, it has less importance overall.

5.4.6.2 The level importance of activities contributing to religious experiences of male and female respondents

The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted on the level of importance of the activities which contributed to the respondents' religious experiences while taking part in the Festival. The results, where there were significant differences by gender, can be found in Table 5.53.

Table 5.53: The level of importance of activities undertaken during the Festival contributing to the religious experiences – significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Taking part in the pilgrimage (walking).	Male	194	2.00	178.22	15659.0	-3.335	0.001	0.17
	Female	198	2.00	214.41				
	Total	392	2.00	-				
Carrying the Kanwar.	Male	187	3.00	165.93	13451.0	-3.736	0.000	0.19
	Female	183	3.00	205.50				
	Total	370	3.00	-				

The results in Table 5.53 show that null hypothesis is rejected as there were statistically significant differences by gender in relation to the level of importance attached to ‘taking part in the pilgrimage (walking)’ ($p = 0.001$ with a weak effect size $r = 0.17$) and ‘carrying the Kanwar’ ($p = 0.000$ with a weak effect size $r = 0.19$). The lower mean rank for both statements indicates that Hindu males were more likely to consider walking and carrying Kanwar to be more important to their religious experiences than females.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test for the remaining activities in terms of the level of importance of the activities which contributed to the respondents’ religious experiences while taking part in the Festival can be found at Table 5.54.

Table 5.54: The level of importance of activities undertaken during the Festival contributing to the religious experiences – no significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Worshipping in a temple at Ganga Talao.	Male	204	1.00	198.45	19573.5	-1.258	0.209	-
	Female	205	2.00	211.52				
	Total	409	1.00	-				
Fasting in preparation for, and during, the period of the Festival.	Male	205	1.00	204.84	20532.5	-0.172	0.863	-
	Female	202	1.00	203.15				
	Total	407	1.00	-				
Following set rituals when collecting sacred water.	Male	204	1.00	197.01	19281.0	-1.291	0.197	-
	Female	202	1.00	210.05				
	Total	406	1.00	-				
Performing special acts of worship that were additional to your religious activities.	Male	196	2.00	190.25	17982.5	-1.086	0.278	-
	Female	195	2.00	201.78				
	Total	391	2.00	-				

Table 5.54 (continued): The level of importance of activities undertaken during the Festival contributing to the religious experiences – no significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Attending prayers and observing rituals for the Char Pahar Ki Pooja.	Male	195	1.00	188.29				
	Female	192	2.00	199.79				
	Total	387	2.00	-	17607.5	-1.108	0.268	-

The null hypothesis is not rejected for the activities in Table 5.54, as there was no statistically significant difference between gender and the level of importance attached to these activities which contributes to their religious experiences. Therefore, both types of respondents are likely to attach similar importance of these activities in contributing to their religious experiences while taking part in the Festival.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has used and extended the ‘generic’ model of Shackley (2001), see Section 2.3.3.4, to gain deeper insights into the activities that the local Hindu respondents valued the most as part of the *actual Festival product* (the four components of the Festival: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja) and the level of importance attached to the activities undertaken in contributing to their religious experiences. In doing so, this study helps to assess in detail the behaviours of the local Hindu participants in a sequential manner during the Festival and the importance of those behaviours in contributing to their religious experiences.

The findings in this chapter show that there is a divergence in the views of the local Hindu residents and the Mauritius Religious Authorities (RA). For example, in *Chapter 4*, the RAs considered the prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja to be an important component of the Festival whereas, in the quantitative research on which this chapter focuses, it was found that only two thirds of the respondents attended these prayers. This means that one third of the Hindu participants failed to be exposed to the ‘total’ religious experiences and benefits during their last participation in the Festival. The findings of this chapter also show that males and females tend to undertake similar activities in the four components of the Festival and give equal importance to the activities in contributing to their religious experiences. The findings of both *Chapters 4 and 5* will be critically evaluated in *Chapter 8* in order to assess the relationship between the two sets of stakeholders (the RAs and local Hindu residents) by considering whether their views coincide or are in conflict with each other.

This chapter has also provided an overall evaluation of the Festival by the Hindu respondents in regard to their last participation. They rated eight personal religious benefits (‘attained personal

salvation', 'made a personal sacrifice', 'increased my self-knowledge', 'renewed spiritually', 'experienced self-renewal', 'been purified', 're-affirmed my faith and belief', 'found meaning in my life' and 'gone through hardship for my faith') as 'quite a bit' and the remaining two ('found meaning in my life' and 'gone through hardship for my faith') as 'moderately'. Essentially, the findings indicate that the Hindu respondents experienced strong religious feelings for the Festival. Whilst *Chapter 4* used the views of the RAs to identify the broader *core religious experiences and benefits* for the Hindu participants this chapter, *Chapter 5*, identifies specific elements of the core religious benefits the Hindu participants gained through their participation in the Festival. The Festival offers the local Hindu residents a range of profound religious benefits to fulfil their religious obligations and goals. The quantitative findings will be merged with the qualitative findings and then evaluated in *Chapter 8*.

Lastly, this chapter identifies specific elements of the physical and social settings (see Sections 4.4.3 and 4.4.4) contributing to the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* for the participants. For instance, in terms of the physical settings, the participants identified the following statements as 'very important' in contributing to their religious experiences: 'experiencing the sacred atmosphere' during the journey to and from Ganga Talao, 'the sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, incense sticks burning)' and 'the sacred environment (e.g. the temples, the sacred water, cool temperature)' at Ganga Talao. In terms of the social settings, the statement 'be together with my family and/or friends' was identified as 'very important' as part of the personal 'social' opportunities (see Section 5.4.4). Thus, these findings indicate that both the physical and social settings during the Festival influence the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* for the participants.

Overall, both *Chapters 4 and 5* have helped in understanding the nature of the religious experiences in a more complete manner. Whilst the qualitative findings provided rich exploratory information, the quantitative findings identified specific activities undertaken by the participants and the religious experiences gained during the Festival that allows cautious generalisability to the population. Therefore, the use of a mixed methods approach in this study has helped to address a key gap in the literature as, until now, only a limited amount of research has used this approach in the study of religious festivals and pilgrimages.

The next chapter, *Chapter 6*, will identify the *authentic nature of religious experiences* offered by the Festival and site from the perspectives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities and the 'Public Sector' organisations. These stakeholders also gave the views of their organisation as to the encouragement of tourists, not of Hindu faith, to attend the Festival and the perceived potential impacts of these tourists on the authenticity of the religious experiences for the participants.

CHAPTER 6: PERCEPTIONS OF THE MAURITIAN AUTHORITIES ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES AND THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES FROM COMMODITISING THE FESTIVAL

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding two chapters, *Chapter 4 and Chapter 5*, have presented the results of the research into the perceived *core religious experiences*, the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* and the religious experiences of participants in each of the *actual Festival product* (the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja).

The primary aim of this chapter is to investigate whether or not the dilution or alteration of the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* through commoditisation as a result of encouraging more tourists not of Hindu faith to participate in the Festival is acceptable to two sets of local stakeholders, namely the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the ‘Public Sector’ organisations (PS). In order to achieve this aim, the chapter analyses the views of these stakeholders by addressing the following two objectives:

1. To identify and explore what is considered to constitute the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri and site to the local Hindu participants.
2. To investigate the possible impacts of promoting and developing the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri and site for more tourists not of Hindu faith and to assess the perceived possible outcomes on the authenticity of the religious experiences.

To meet these objectives, this chapter has two sections. First, Section 6.2 outlines the perceived authenticity of religious experiences, in regard to what is offered by the Festival and site to the local Hindu participants (participants) be it religious, physical and/or social in nature. Second, Section 6.3 highlights the views of the stakeholders on the encouragement of tourists not of Hindu faith to attend the Festival and the perceived potential impacts of these tourists on the authenticity of the religious experiences for the participants. For ease of presentation, as in the previous qualitative *Chapter 4*, the themes that have emerged in each of the two sections are introduced followed by examples of supporting quotations, illustrated in boxes, from the stakeholders. Also, quotations

have been highlighted using blue background shading to reflect key sets of words/sentences relevant to the sub-themes and/or constituents.

6.2 THE AUTHENTIC NATURE OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

6.2.1 Background

This section uses the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the ‘Public Sector’ organisations (PS) to determine the perceived *authentic nature of the religious experiences* for the local Hindu community and participants which, if lost or changed significantly, would have a significant detrimental impact on their religious experiences. The views of the representatives of the PS are also important as they help to further understand what features of the Festival and site are considered unique and authentic and have the potential to attract tourists.

Based on the analyses of the RAs responses, three themes emerged, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, namely the (1) ‘authentic’ religious experiences, (2) ‘authentic’ physical experiences and (3) ‘authentic’ social experiences. The views of the RAs and PS were dispersed among these three themes.

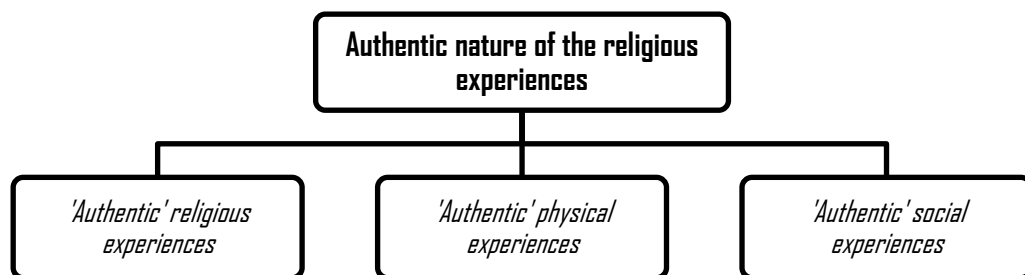


Figure 6.1: The three themes relating to the authentic nature of the religious experiences

6.2.2 The ‘authentic’ religious experiences

This theme relates to the religious experiences resulting from the activities performed by the participants that have unique and meaningful significance within the Hindu religious system. A loss in the ‘authentic’ religious experiences may potentially have negative influences on the social ethos, disposition, identity and religious experiences of the participants. The constituent ‘undertaking devotional practices’ emerged and shaped this theme.

6.2.2.1 Undertaking devotional practices

The constituent ‘undertaking devotional practices’ was derived from the analyses of the RAs and PS interviews. It refers to the religious activities that the participants undertake to showcase or express their devotion for their religion during the Festival.

6.2.2.1.1 The views of RAs on undertaking devotional practices

Of the eight RAs, three representatives provided the views of their organisation on this emerging constituent. The responses of these representatives are given in Box 6.1.

Box 6.1: Quotations from the RAs representing the constituent ‘undertaking devotional practices’

The type of clothes	
ORA1	“...the attire, 90% of the pilgrims are well-dressed [traditional white clothes]. If they start changing the attire to make the Festival much more a “Gamat” [party-like] then it is going to affect [i.e. have a significant detrimental impact on] the religious experiences for the participants.”
The prayers of the Shiv Abhishek	
ORO2	“...to begin with, they make a place to pray, then they make a kalash [metal pot holding a coconut] – this is obligatory - then they do Shiv Abhishek [prayer for Shiv]... And this Shiv Abhishek is done three times a day – morning, midday, evening - every day up to the time of the Char Pahar ki Pooja. But the first time the Shiv Abhishek is done, is at the Mangal Mahadev.”
Making a personal sacrifice	
ORA3	“... [If] people cannot walk to go to Grand-Bassin, it’s a possibility, this aspect of the walk disappears. The aspect of sacrifice [will] disappear...”

As identified in Box 6.1, the constituent ‘undertaking devotional practices’ is made up of three elements: the ‘type of clothes’ (ORA1), the ‘prayers of the Shiv Abhishek’ (ORO2) and ‘making a personal sacrifice’ (ORA3). These are religious activities that the participants adhere to for the Festival and which can cause psychological changes for them. The undertaking of the religious activities is considered by these RAs as contributing to the existential authenticity of religious experiences for the participants.

On the ‘type of clothes’ worn by the participants, ORA1 put emphasis on the way most participants get dressed, in particular the wearing of traditional white clothes, during the Festival, as a religious activity that gives them the opportunity to demonstrate their devotion towards their religion. In Hinduism, white clothes, worn at religious festivals like the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri, symbolise purity. The wearing of the white attire is a ‘physical’ religious action and can also have a psychological effect on the participants by evoking the feeling of being self-purified. These processes are considered to trigger transformational experiences for individuals where they develop a feeling of being cleansed and being freed from sin. The wearing of white clothes for the Festival also helps the participants to feel a deeper sense of belonging and social

identity. Therefore, if the type of clothes worn by the participants is lost, or changed significantly, it would have detrimental effect on the perceived existential authenticity of religious experiences.

The ‘prayers of the Shiv Abhishek’ carried out by the participants for Lord Shiva was perceived as contributing to the existential authenticity of religious experiences for participants, as identified by ORO2. ORO2 specified that the Shiv Abhishek is conducted three times a day at the 108 feet statue of Mangal Mahadev at Ganga Talao from the start of the Festival until the Char Pahar ki Pooja. During this physical act of worship, mantras are chanted alongside the use of prayer items such as the Kalash, a metal pot holding a coconut. The religious significance of these prayers is to seek blessings from Lord Shiva at the sacred site before the great night of Lord Shiva. As a result, participants may feel ‘closeness and connectedness’ with Lord Shiva (see Section 4.3.3). Also, performing these prayers three times a day during the Festival can cause psychological changes for the participants. As a result, they are able to experience flow through the rituals. The flow experience is an extraordinary experience achieved through deep involvement and, as such, the participants can gain intense ‘religious’ pleasure which they do not encounter in common everyday activities. Therefore, the undertaking of ‘prayers of the Shiv Abhishek’ at the feet of the Mangal Mahadev statue during the Festival, as identified by the representative of ORO2, may contribute to the existential authenticity of religious experiences for the participants.

‘Making a personal sacrifice’ was identified by ORA3 as an important element of the journey to and from Ganga Talao for the participants who walk. This element relates to the challenges a participant endures throughout his/her walk or the Festival. According to ORA3, the walk is an opportunity to pay homage to Lord Shiva who saved humanity. In essence, ‘making a personal sacrifice’ can be both a physical and a mental process for participants. The sacrifices relate to the bodily feelings of hardship, fatigue and trouble during the course of this physical activity. The outcome from this physical act is that the participants feel self-purified and as a result they undergo self-transformation, a change in oneself. By undertaking the walk, the participants also experience self-actualisation, as they feel accomplished after having taken the sacrifice through walking. Also, the local Hindus are able to demonstrate their religious commitment and belief in Lord Shiva through the sacrifices by undertaking the walk. The walk is an essential feature of the Festival, as noted by ORA3, helping the participants to perpetuate their religious and cultural traditions. The religious benefits from undertaking the walk were identified as contributing to both core and augmented religious experiences (see Sections 4.3.2 and 4.4.2.2). The experience from the walk reinforces the disposition, identity and belief system of the participants thereby contributing to the existential authenticity of religious experiences. Hence, losing this experience of the walk and sacrifice would have a negative impact on the ‘authentic’, ‘core’ and the ‘augmented’ religious experiences.

6.2.2.1.2 The views of PS on undertaking devotional practices

Though the representatives of the PS organisations have different agendas, duties and objectives, PS1 provided the views of the organisation on one specific authentic aspect of the Festival in regard to the carrying of Kanwars, as seen Box 6.2 below.

Box 6.2: Quotation from PS1 relating to ‘undertaking devotional practices’

<i>The journey to and/or from Ganga Talao on foot</i>	
PS1	<p>“...what they [participants who carry Kanwar during their walk] are doing with technology is a major improvement...It is true that it has a good and bad side. The bright side of it is that people have invented extraordinary things from village to village and they have been creative. Technology has caused people’s intelligence to evolve. They are using batteries to provide them with light [during the walk] and are able to listen to music...This is an innovation...People from other religions admire these and...they have to evolve and cannot continue in traditional manners...Yes, they pray Lord Shiva in all the temples and He is symbolic for the Hindus. Everything starts with the concept of ‘Shivji’; in temples or homes, the devotion for Shivji is divine and we cannot explain that...it is spiritual and divine...the walk cannot be stopped...it is once in a year that youngsters undertake this walk. It is enterprising for them and they gain a lot of things.”</p>

PS1 put emphasis on the use of technology by participants who walk during the Festival, in particular for those carrying Kanwars during the journey to and from Ganga Talao. For this organisation, these participants are using sophisticated technology and are getting more creative in regard to the construction and the carrying of these structures. For instance, nowadays Kanwars are equipped with generators that provide the participants with light and music throughout their journey. These are now pulled on four wheels and are no longer carried on the shoulders of those who walk. Even though PS1 is in favour of people and their traditions evolving over time, it is evident that Kanwars are losing the original meanings attached to these structures (see Section 1.2.3.2) and their authenticity. It may be argued that technology may affect the religious connotation of some features of the Festival and the belief system. Notably, the experience resulting from carrying a Kanwar might be altered. The ‘authentic’ religious experiences of a group of participants who walk carrying a Kanwar and singing kirtans and bhajans with religious instruments throughout their journey might differ from another group of participants who walk pulling a Kanwar on four wheels while only listening to kirtans and bhajans through the stereo system.

The views of the representative of PS1 match with those of ORA3 (see Section 6.2.2.1.1) in identifying that the spiritual and divine walk is a crucial and authentic feature of the Festival. The impact of not having the walk during the Festival was noted as potentially affecting the perceived ‘authentic’ religious experiences for the youngsters, more than any other participants, as they have the most to lose in terms of social learning, self-development and their knowledge on life and life’s possibilities. Therefore, if the experience resulting from the walk is changed in any way, this may have serious repercussions on the religious framework of the younger generations, thereby

potentially disrupting their belief, values, culture, and religious and social identity; it may even negatively impact on the authenticity of their religious experiences.

6.2.3 The ‘authentic’ physical experiences

The ‘authentic’ physical experiences relate to the interaction of an individual with the physical amenities and settings, man-made and/or natural, within the environment that is encountered along the way to and from, and at, Ganga Talao during the Festival. This theme consists of two constituents, namely the (1) atmosphere and (2) place dependence and attachment. Both these constituents have emerged from the analyses of the RAs’ interviews as part of the physical settings augmenting the religious experiences in Sections 4.4.3.2 and 4.4.3.3 respectively.

6.2.3.1 Atmosphere

The ‘atmosphere’ is a product of the physical environment and the mental interpretation of that environment. The immersion of a participant in the atmosphere created along the pilgrimage route and at the sacred site influences the sensory experiences which may trigger intense and meaningful experiences. Both sets of stakeholders, RAs and PS, related the views of their organisation on this topic.

6.2.3.1.1 The views of RAs on the atmosphere

From the analyses of the interviews, seven out of eight representatives of RAs expressed their organisational views relevant to the constituent ‘atmosphere’. Their responses are shown in Box 6.3.

Box 6.3: Quotations from the RAs relating to the constituent ‘atmosphere’

<i>The soundscape in a temple</i>	
ORA2	“...a temple [settings], in the natural way, the divine songs and music [make] the vibration different ; these incline you towards the Almighty . If in a temple you put pop, disco and techno music , do you think people can listen to these and are they going to reach godhood?”
<i>The naturescape and climate at the site</i>	
ORO2	“We can preserve the climate ...There are birds and monkeys [life and habitats] which should be preserved...if such things [development] continue, then in the future, you won’t be able to see fog and it will no longer be cold at Grand Bassin. It will be hot and it will [rarely] rain ...the environment [related to nature and climate] at Grand Bassin should be preserved, like it was 50 years ago and when you get there, you feel that you are in a spiritual place; it is crucial to maintain its originality ”

Box 6.3 (continued): Quotations from the RAs relating to the constituent ‘atmosphere’

<i>The detrimental effects on the quality of the atmosphere</i>	
ORA1	“If we start making the Festival a commercial one; food is being sold to pilgrims, we impose a fee for any car or bus entering there like you have in many other places...then it is going to affect [the authenticity of the Festival]...it will affect the quality and kinetic of the Festival.”
ORO4	“As I mentioned, since 1992 the bazaar [commercialisation at the site] has stopped. We have to be very careful that it should not start ever again as this disturbs the mindset [of participants], the routine prayers...those who are well-off, sometimes they come and business ideas come to their minds...but Government should be very careful that such things should not be entertained to the detriment of the area, atmosphere and the religious atmosphere which prevails at Ganga Talao.”
ORO5	“...keep this hidden spirituality. This is very important. Mostly its serenity. This serenity should not disappear. The purity existing there should not disappear. So we have to be careful. Some people are saying we need to put aashram [spiritual retreat]; we have to be very careful. If we have the public accumulated everywhere by making an aashram there, where people go to stay and picnic and so on, then it won't be this [spiritual, serene] finally.”
<i>The associated authentic religious experiences on the quality of the atmosphere</i>	
ORO5	“...long ago, during this celebration, we saw the accumulation of prashaad [leaves, bananas, coconut and rice] as they were being thrown there [at Ganga Talao]. All this gave a feeling of nausea. Nowadays we see that people are employed for maintaining and keeping the place clean. If this continues as such, it will be good. Also, it is good that the Kanwars are not left at Grand-Bassin, they [participants] take these back home. If these would have been left there, it would have been a problem. Hindus respect that place, that's why they do not make a mess at Ganga Talao, they do not destroy the environment, destroy the spirituality, or ecology...it should continue like this.”

Different elements of the ‘atmosphere’ were perceived by the RAs to form the authentic features and characteristics of the site: the type and importance of religious songs and music in a temple representing the ‘soundscape in a temple’, was referred to by ORA2; the climate, scenery and wild life denoting ‘the naturescape and climate at the site’, were related by ORO2; ‘the associated authentic religious experiences on the quality of the atmosphere’ at the sacred site was specified by ORO5; and the ‘detrimental effects on the quality of the atmosphere’ through commercialisation and over-development of the site were reported by ORA1, ORO4 and ORO5. The experience resulting from the different elements of the atmosphere has psychological effects on a participant thereby contributing to the existential authenticity of religious experiences.

In relation to the element of ‘soundscape in a temple’, ORA2 argued that by listening to religious songs and music, one can reach Godhood by feeling proximity to God. In other words, the style of religious music played in the temple settings is important and constructs the authentic atmosphere. In effect, the atmosphere triggers psychological stimuli that have the potential to heighten and evoke existential ‘authentic’ religious experiences for a participant. If, as suggested by ORA2, inappropriate music is played in the temples, such as pop, techno and disco, this may disrupt and distort the unique experiences for the participant and he/she would no longer feel close to God. Essentially, the hymn allows a participant to remain focused and connected to his/her religious values, identity and belief system.

The wildlife at the site as part of the 'naturescape' and the fog, coldness, rain as part of 'climate' were identified by ORO2 as influencing the authentic characteristics of Ganga Talao. The sacred site, as indicated in *Chapter 1* (see Section 1.2.3.2.3), is located on a 20 acres natural park with a magnificent scenic landscape. By experiencing the flora and fauna, distinct climate and the unique spatial layout around the sacred site, a participant can have liminal experiences, an escape from his/her day-to-day routine. Also, these attributes of the site may intensify his/her existential religious experiences and attachment to the site, thereby allowing him/her to gain 'authentic' experiences. For ORO2, the preservation of the atmosphere resulting from the physical tangible settings around the sacred lake is a very important attribute of the site. In other words, the pristine, flora and fauna, scenery and the spatial layout create unique and authentic features and characteristics of the site that should be preserved and maintained.

On another note, from the analyses of the interviews of ORA1, ORO4 and ORO5, it emerged that adverse impacts on the physical environment of the site may have detrimental effect on the inherent authentic quality of the atmosphere, resulting to negative mental interpretation of the experience. For instance, the anticipated/potential commercial and developmental activities such as the selling of food to participants who walk, or the imposing of entrance fees at the sacred site, or the construction of a spiritual retreat and the conversion of the site into a picnic area could affect the purity and the serenity of the religious atmosphere at Ganga Talao. It is believed that if Ganga Talao was developed as such, this may subsequently have undesirable consequences on the attachment that local Hindu participants have for the site. Therefore, in order to prevent the site from losing its religious values, meanings and authentic characters, there is a need to give careful consideration to the commercialisation and over-development of Ganga Talao.

Concerning the associated authentic religious experiences of the Festival, three characteristics of the atmosphere at the site were identified, namely the 'cleanliness', 'spirituality' and 'ecology' (ORO5). Each of these three components adds value to the atmosphere and can potentially enhance the authenticity of religious experiences for participants at Ganga Talao. The atmosphere can influence the sensory experiences of an individual and, after immersing with the atmosphere, he/she co-creates unique experiences leading to ecstatic feelings and religious fulfilment. The qualities of the experiences at Ganga Talao can in turn influence a participant's visiting patterns and attachment to the site. ORO5 mentioned that in the past there was 'ritual waste', leftovers from offerings, which were an eyesore around the sacred lake and these were seen to negatively affect the atmosphere at Ganga Talao. However, more people actively cleaning and throwing away the ritual waste, has helped to maintain the quality of the site, and therefore the atmosphere at the site, during the Festival. Nonetheless, the fact remains that if there are negative taints on the cleanliness of the site, it can potentially have adverse psychological outcomes that may negatively impact on the overall evaluations and quality of the existential 'authentic' religious experiences for the participants. These can in turn adversely affect the image, perception and attachment of participants to the Festival and its site. Therefore, if for any reason, the site is not properly maintained, and the

sense of spirit attached to the site is lost, this will negatively impact on the perceived existential authenticity of religious experiences for the participants. Subsequently, this may also have undesirable implications on the augmented experiences for the participants.

6.2.3.1.2 The views of PS on atmosphere

Only PS2 provided insight relevant to the constituent ‘atmosphere’. The comments of this representative are shown in Box 6.4.

Box 6.4: Quotation from PS2 in relation to the constituent ‘atmosphere’

	Overall quality of the atmosphere for the Festival
	<p>“Development does not mean more construction, more artificial hard landscaping. What we need is more subtle landscaping, screening of what has already been done, recreate the atmosphere, it will not return to its pristine state, that would be peaceful (what could be a spiritual site). When you get there, the atmosphere should be there. The spiritual atmosphere should already have been created. It should not be like you are getting into a nightclub. [What specific aspects of the Festival...have the potential to attract more tourists?] First is the ‘ambiance’ itself...accommodation should not be provided there...the ambiance which is created throughout the whole country for a week during the Festival, the mood that is created is enough to make the people participate and walk with the pilgrims. He [the tourist] should be a pilgrim [participant who walk]; he should behave as such. Second, is the lake itself...Now the site should not be changed or damaged as it will lose the atmosphere that is created with so many people praying. This is something different, you can’t find it. Probably in India, but this [in Mauritius] is unique...”</p>
	The nature of the atmosphere at Ganga Talao
PS2	<p>“[You’ve used the word atmosphere...what your organisation thinks, create this atmosphere?...]when you go there during the week of the Festival... all the people are praying in serenity and the smell of the scented sticks -it is something else- camphor and all their offerings [rituals materials] people are putting in the water, this is unique. This cannot be reproduced artificially at any time. The uniqueness occurs only during this one week. It cannot be reproduced at any other time of the year. If you go there at any other time of the year, the temple and the water is there but the atmosphere is not there together with the intensity and the scent. The image is unique only for this one week of the Festival. This does not occur at any other time; it cannot be re-produced and re-created. This makes it authentic and unique.”</p>
	The ambiance at Ganga Talao
	<p>“[Now you’ve used the word ambiance, how can you describe ambiance?] Atmosphere is what is created...Ambiance is movement - which is important here- You see people coming with Kanwars, with children and so on. This movement is part of the ambiance. It is not the ambiance of a disco or of a hotel. It is not just an image, there is a movement here, there are people serving tea and so on, someone else is selling books; this is the ambiance. It is something vivid and lively, it’s not something which is lifeless. So first is the atmosphere which is created there and second is the ambiance which plays an active part of it. And both come together to create the real product.”</p>

Even though PS2 is not currently involved in developing the Festival for more tourists, this representative provided insight as to what makes the experiences of the Festival and its site authentic. In the above quotations, PS2 related an overall perspective of the atmosphere during the Festival and its site and also specified what makes the atmosphere distinct.

PS2 is against the over-development of the sacred site regarding the provision of accommodation facilities. Such development, as pointed out by PS2, will negatively affect the scenery and may damage or alter the spiritual atmosphere at the site. The unique and distinct features of the Festival and site in regard to the atmosphere generated is key as these are what tourists would seek to experience and could potentially attract them. For PS2, the site is transformed and becomes unique for the Festival and this cannot be seen or replicated during any other period of the year. For instance, there are large numbers of participants carrying out rituals and praying near the lake continuously during the week of the Festival. The spirituality of the site is enhanced through the burning of a high number of scented sticks by the participants. Adding to this, PS2 stated that it is the ambiance which makes the site active and brings it to life. From Section 4.4.3.2, the ambiance is seen as a denomination of the atmosphere. For PS2, the ambiance includes the effect of the congregation of the participants at the site and the ongoing procession reaching the sacred lake with Kanwars and the free food and drink distribution offered to the attendees. Experiencing the unique atmosphere and ambiance at the site is what make the Festival experiences authentic. By being immersed in the physical ‘intangible’ environment, participants may have a positive, pleasant and stimulating sentiment giving rise to a positive perception and evaluation of the Festival and the site. Basically, this is what the Mauritian Hindu participants seek and what the tourists are likely to seek.

6.2.3.2 Place dependence and attachment

This constituent emerged from the analyses of four out of eight representatives and their responses are illustrated in Box 6.5.

Box 6.5: Quotations from the RAs relating to the constituent ‘place dependence and attachment’

<i>The attachment to the site</i>	
ORA2	“...if the authenticity of the lake is not preserved, people won’t feel the attachment to that place, because that place has got a symbolical attachment for any Hindus, not only Hindus, for anyone who has faith in Shiva.”
<i>The sacred water</i>	
ORO3	“The main spiritual value at Ganga Talao is the lake, the water, because you need the water to pray. For us it is very important.”
<i>The physical development of the site</i>	
ORA2	“...infrastructures have been put: it’s for the welfare of the pilgrims, and not only for the pilgrims [participants] but for the lake itself...So while putting that infrastructure, we have not distorted the configuration, we have not distorted the topology, geographical topology of the lake...The lake is the lake...We have not made the lake, as it is in its natural form. We have not made it a square or we have not made it a circle around the lake...And that is important because pilgrims are coming and they...are giving that spiritual connotation, that spiritual significance of that lake.”
<i>The physical development of the site</i>	
ORO2	“First, the natural environment there [at Ganga Talao]...should be preserved and it should not be destroyed...For example trees are being cut, buildings are being constructed...When parking slots are made, many trees are being cut, and nothing else is being planted...Trees should not be cut, and if trees are cut to build parking slots, trees should be replanted somewhere else...”

Box 6.5 (continued): Quotations from the RAs relating to the constituent ‘place dependence and attachment’

<i>The physical development of the site</i>	
ORO3	“...for the whole period of one month, Ganga Talao is transformed. When you leave the house you may be angry, but when you reach there you have no more anger...Many friends, even Muslims are telling me, that although we do not have faith in your religion, but when we are tired and go there, we are not stressed anymore...So we see the need to build a spiritual park where every year there will be some meditation ; people can come to meditate for an hour during the Festival...A person can be bad, committed a tort, committed a crime, but when he goes there, he repents; when he goes there he feels a change in himself”
<i>The outcome of physical development making the place inauthentic</i>	
ORO5	“Grand Bassin should not have a lot of concrete everywhere. We must think about the setting and its location, the environment, the green planet which we must leave to the future generation. There should not be too many concrete structures which will hide the environment or destroy it. So we have to be very, very careful. So before the authorities give future permits, they should take these things into consideration... there is a need to warn the concerned authorities. All future development should be in the future setting...We have to take into consideration this environmental aspects, green planet and so on. Sustainable development is the word because we have signed an agreement somewhere with international agencies, so sustainable development has to be taken into consideration.”

This constituent is made up of the ‘attachment to the site’, the ‘sacred water’ and the ‘physical development of the site’ for the well-being of participants as suggested by ORA2, ORO2 and ORO3. From a different perspective, ORO5 showed concern regarding the physical development taking place at Ganga Talao that could adversely impact on the perceived existential authenticity of the religious experiences sought and gained by the participants during the Festival as the lake has undergone changes.

The ‘attachment to the site’ emerged from the analysis of the interview of ORA2. This element relates to the emotional bond/ties with a sacred space. It is based on one’s belief and commitments. The sacred site, Ganga Talao, is a beacon attracting the followers of Lord Shiva for the Festival. It is an opportunity for the participants to express their identity, religious commitment and devotion to Lord Shiva and their affective ties to the sacred site. A positive experience between an individual and the site during the Festival may enhance his/her overall perceived image, meanings and bond to Ganga Talao thereby influencing his/her future visits and behaviours. Therefore, if participants have pleasant and satisfying experiences, these would trigger positive and ecstatic feelings which reinforce their belief, sense of belonging, pride and attachment to the sacred site.

The importance of the ‘sacred water’ at Ganga Talao, as part of the associated religious experiences that the Festival offers to participants, was mentioned by ORO3. The sacred lake has existed for a very long time, but was only discovered in 1897 by Pandit Giri Gossagne. Since then, Ganga Talao has its importance for the participants as they follow Pandit Giri Gossagne’s footsteps to undertake the walk to collect the sacred water from the site. Participants need the sacred water for their prayers, so they go and collect it. This helps them to consolidate their affective bond with the sacred

water and site. The psychological effect of praying with the sacred water may trigger transcending experiences; these are experiences which are beyond the limits of an ordinary experience. By experiencing the sacred water, the participants develop cultural and historical bonds and are emotionally attached to the site.

The ‘physical development’ of the site was identified as part of associated authentic religious experiences for the Festival. More specifically, the physical development included the infrastructures (ORA2), the parking slots (ORO2) and the construction of a spiritual park (ORO3) at Ganga Talao. These physical amenities are provided to meet the needs of the participants and to support them in attaining their goals during the Festival. For instance, necessary infrastructures for the well-being of participants have been provided to help them access the lake in order to pray and collect the sacred water (ORA2). The benefits from the provision of infrastructures to support the participants’ goals evoke positive emotions. As long as these physical amenities fulfil their needs or goals, and help in meeting their expectations, it is believed that the meanings attached to the sacred site would positively affect them. However, the outcome of these developments may be a strain on the environment, the natural landscape, at the site. Hence, there is a need to preserve the environment from such over-development. For example, development may result in the cutting down of trees (ORO2) and facilities such as concrete structures at the site may also affect the green ecology (ORO5). ORO5 showed concerns about the over-development of the sacred site that is damaging the original and authentic natural site settings. As stated in Section 6.2.3.1, such development occurring at the site has negative consequences on the atmosphere at the site. In addition, ORO5 pointed out that concerned authorities should be cautious in giving construction or development permits at Ganga Talao as these may negatively affect the natural scenery. As a result, such development is making the sacred site less sustainable. ORO5 suggested that a solution to the deforestation at the sacred site could be to replant trees to maintain the natural environment.

All the elements of ‘place dependence and attachment’ were identified as vital in contributing to the perceived existential authenticity of religious experiences for the participants. For them, the site is a representation of their religious and social identity. Hence, a loss in the ‘authentic’ nature of the site would adversely affect their deep connection with the sacred water and site. In turn, this may negatively influence their religious commitment, disposition, identity and belief. ‘Place dependence and attachment’ was also identified as contributing to the ‘augmented’ experiences (see Section 4.4.3.3). Therefore, if the features of the site are not preserved, the physical settings that bring about the augmentation of the religious experiences for participants will also be negatively affected.

6.2.4 The ‘authentic’ social experiences

The ‘authentic’ social experiences relate to social experiences resulting from the communal social activities and interactions of each individual with others during the Festival. This theme emerged from the analyses of interviews of both the RAs and the PS.

6.2.4.1 The views of RAs on ‘authentic’ social experiences

Three constituents arose from this theme: the ‘dynamic and active participation’, ‘facilitating participants’ participation’ and ‘Hindu identity’. The views of four out of eight RAs related to these constituents are shown in Box 6.6.

Box 6.6: Quotations from the RAs relating to ‘authentic’ social experiences

<i>The dynamic and active participation</i>	
ORA1	“Even at the site, I find people having more faith; the number of people in the religion has increased and will increase.”
ORO4	“People from other countries, those of Indian origin, they have heard about this place, they come and do the prayer and go.”
<i>Facilitating participants’ participation</i>	
ORA3	“It will impact directly...the direct and indirect participation of those who will not go to Ganga Talao but will stand on the road [referring to the volunteers] to give water and fruits. This means the aspect of the society [the social aspect], not only for Hindu, will not exist. Today people are seeing, they are participating and feeling good. With every nice feeling they have, they will do good...This means that everything someone does, if he does good things, there won’t be a problem. There will be a lack of possibilities of accomplishment which he will not have to lose. Not lose, but a lack of it.”
<i>Hindu identity</i>	
ORA3	“We are all Hindus. Each manifests in his/her way; by itself this is an awakening. It is important that we give ourselves an occasion to remind ourselves because we have to remind ourselves. When we take part in the Maha Shivaratri, we renew ourselves. We renew our faith; we renew ourselves in the society and among others. These aspects for humans are important. If they do not remind and renew themselves, they can forget themselves. So this Festival gives an occasion to benefit, to believe in them and to believe in others. It makes us better and continues our belief.”

The experience resulting from the ‘dynamic and active participation’ (ORA1 and ORO4) and ‘Hindu identity’ (ORA3) are psychological manifestations that emerged from the analyses of the interviews as being the authentic features of the Festival and at the site. In contrast ‘facilitating participants’ participation’ (ORA3) was generated when analysing the quotations on the associated authentic religious experiences of the Festival. It relates to the benevolent services provided by volunteers that help the Festival run smoothly resulting in unique social experiences for participants along the way to and from Ganga Talao and at the site during the Festival.

The ‘dynamic and active participation’ refers to the feelings generated from the massive participation of a high number of the participants during the Festival. This constituent also emerged as part of the ‘augmented’ social experiences (see Section 4.4.4.1). The growing numbers of participants present at the site and participating in the Festival over this short period give an indication of the dynamic nature of the congregation. Essentially, this means that a high number of participants are taking part in the Festival and they have the opportunity to re-affirm their religious and social identity. The dynamic and active involvement of like-minded participants sharing similar religious values, purposes and interests help them to develop a greater sense of belonging, unity and pride. By being involved in the Festival, the participants feel they are part of a grand religious

celebration. Furthermore, ORO4 acknowledged that tourists of Hindu faith, from other countries, also attend the Festival. The local participants and the tourists of Hindu faith are able to foster a greater sense of community during the Festival thereby augmenting the social experiences for the participants. If for any reason(s) this dynamic process of participation is challenged, or distorted, this will negatively impact on the participants' behaviour and their overall perception. A decline in the number of the participants will indicate that more participants are missing out on the opportunity to demonstrate their sense of commitment and responsibility towards their religion and traditions. Therefore, maintaining the 'dynamic and active participation' is crucial in preserving the existential 'authentic' and the 'augmented' social experiences.

The constituent 'facilitating participants' participation' emerged from the interview of ORA3. It also emerged as a constituent of the 'augmented' social experiences (see Section 4.4.4.4). Those 'facilitating participants' participation' include Hindu and non-Hindu volunteers who offer the basic needs to the participants, for example they provide them with water and fruits as noted by ORA3. The provision of voluntary services fosters interaction amongst the participants as well as between volunteers and the participants. Furthermore, 'facilitating participants' participation' will also allow the interaction among Hindus participants and between Hindus and non-Hindus participants to take place. This in turn helps to heighten a greater sense of community spirit and promotes the Mauritian identity during the Festival. As such, participants are able to collectively enjoy pleasant and unique existential social experiences. Therefore, if this aspect of 'facilitating participants' participation' is lost, the experience from the interaction between a participant and volunteers will decrease and this could have detrimental impacts on the 'authentic' and 'augmented' social experiences of the participants. In essence, the absence of the voluntary services will negatively influence the communal experiences and the feelings of empathy between participants and volunteers along the way to and from Ganga Talao and at Ganga Talao.

The 'Hindu identity' identified by ORA3 emerged from the interviews as part of the 'authentic' social experiences during the Festival. It is fostered through the collective activities with others during the Festival. Being with others, a participant can reinforce his/her sense of community and belonging. In essence, there is a sense of union and they are able to demonstrate a greater sense of commitment, responsibility and inspiration vis-à-vis their religion, embodiment and society. These are essential for the perpetuation of the Hindu religion at large. Tampering with the social experiences gained through the 'Hindu identity' will have a significant detrimental effect on the belief and social ethos thereby affecting the existential 'authentic' social experiences for participants during the Festival.

All three constituents are considered by the RAs as contributing to the perceived existential authenticity of religious experiences for the participants. During the Festival, the participants have the opportunity to experience a sense of togetherness and oneness as well as pride and belonging. If these constituents are significantly affected, the overall 'authentic' social experiences would be

jeopardised thereby negatively influencing the social and religious identity, collective experiences and satisfaction of the participants.

6.2.4.2 The views of PS on ‘authentic’ social experiences

The quotes of two of the three PS organisations on the emerged theme ‘authentic’ social experiences are illustrated in Box 6.7.

Box 6.7: Quotations from the PS relating to ‘authentic’ social experiences

Social learning	
PS1	“...there are many positive impacts on human development, on the youngsters. Because they are going by walk, they are observing a lot of things, they are also observing a lot of development in the country, they are looking at infrastructures which are improving: they are widening their horizon, because they are witnessing as they go on their way. All sorts of people, vehicles, services, and all this impacts on the youngster’s development. I think there are a lot of positive impacts.”
The dynamic and active participation	
PS3	“It’s unique in the world, you don’t have an event like Maha Shivaratri elsewhere...but in terms of pilgrims [participants], there are at least 400,000 of Mauritians [this includes those travelling by other means of transport] during the Festival...Well, first of all Mauritius is quite special. Today when we talk about Maha Shivaratri, people from other communities goes and attends the event...because it’s important to learn about other cultures in Mauritius.”
Facilitating participants’ participation	
PS3	“I think it is very special for the Hindus even. I am sure that almost all the Hindus do it, they attend this great event. What is special also is that we see a lot of volunteers around Mauritius supporting [Participants]...I don’t know whether it is the right word... but giving foods, giving drinks to the devotees...milk, flower, sugar, all the basics that they need to give to people... oil. For one week, everybody is busy in this event preparing and helping.”

Of the three constituents that have emerged from the interviews of the PS, ‘dynamic and active participation’ and ‘facilitating participants’ participation’ were similar constituents as those identified by the RAs. By contrast, ‘social learning’ emerged from the analysis of the interview with PS1 as an additional constituent of ‘authentic’ social experiences. ‘Social learning’ is a psychological manifestation whereby an individual strengthens his/her skills and understandings by being exposed to different situations during the pilgrimage. PS1 considered that the participation of youngsters in the Festival has positive bearings on their development. It can be argued that tourist also can potentially use the opportunity to learn more about the Hindu tradition, cultures and religion, thereby contributing to their development; this will give them the authentic experiences they seek during the Festival.

The constituent ‘dynamic and active participation’ emerged from the interview of PS3. For PS3, there is an estimated number of 400,000 participants during the Festival. The experience of kinaesthetic and dynamic procession by participants, including non-Hindus, instigates a sense of grandeur and *communitas*. The participation of non-Hindus in the Festival may also foster the

Mauritian identity. PS3 added that during the Festival there are a lot of volunteers around Mauritius ‘facilitating participants’ participation’ by providing en-route services to help participants who walk with their basic needs during their journey. Therefore, the engagement between participants who walk and volunteers or among the participants who walk also triggers social interaction. Altogether, these two constituents contribute to existential ‘authentic’ social experiences.

For both these organisations, the three constituents were seen to contribute to the authentic experiences that tourists would like to experience at the Festival. Arguably, the tourists who intend to take part in the Festival may have the opportunity to learn more on the local cultures and Hindu traditions. They will also be able to socialise and interact with the participants and volunteers. Positive social experiences for the tourists and participants will influence the tourists’ level of satisfaction and quality of their authentic experiences during their participation in the Festival.

6.3 THE POSSIBLE IMPACTS OF COMMODITISATION ON THE FESTIVAL AND SITE AND THE AUTHENTIC NATURE OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

6.3.1 Background

This section consists of three parts and it highlights the views of the representatives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the ‘Public Sector’ organisations (PS) on (1) the possible impacts of promoting and developing the Festival and site for more tourists not of the Hindu faith, (2) the perceived outcomes of an increased number of these tourists on the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* at the Festival and its site, and (3) the possible outcomes/broader impacts that may result from the development of the Festival.

6.3.2 The possible impacts of promoting and developing the Festival and site for more tourists not of Hindu faith

This sub-section provides the views of the RAs and the PS on the encouragement of tourists not of Hindu faith, by tour operators and the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure, to attend the Festival. All the representatives of the RAs and PS were in favour of promoting and developing the Festival and site for more tourists but with caveats.

6.3.2.1 The views of RAs on encouraging tourists not of Hindu faith for the Festival

All eight representatives expressed views as to developing and promoting the Festival to tourists not of Hindu faith. The responses of seven representatives are given in Box 6.8.

Box 6.8: Views of the RAs on the encouragement of tourists not of the Hindu faith to attend the Festival

ORA1	“...it has to be actively promoted, I think the Ministry of Tourism must take positive actions to encourage people to come from other countries during the period of the Festival...many tourists who have come even if they are not from the Hindu faith but...you can see them participating in the Festival; with a lot of respect...We should be encouraging and the Ministry should be giving facilities to these tourists to stay nearby...it is not a commercial place. If it was a commercial place then automatically the arrival of tourists would have had an impact on the religious activities and the Festival itself...there is no sale of goods, food...we would not tolerate such businesses...We even stopped people from selling bracelets, magazines, books...we alert the police to stop them.”
ORA2	“Yes we welcome them because...all human beings are children of God...we are not the one to prevent anyone because it [Ganga Talao] is the abode of the Almighty. So it also belongs to them [tourists]. They are coming for a positive thing...we should encourage them, as a human being, not only as an organisation. As a human being, it is our duty, responsibility to do it and to propagate our culture and traditions...TV crews from most part of the world, nearly all parts of the world are coming to have coverage for the Festival and we are giving them interviews.”
ORA3	Our organisation began to develop religious/cultural tourism. Anybody who performs pilgrimage in Mauritius can join...We have already registered a society for this (UK, Africa, Netherlands, Surinam, Trinidad, India). We promote this [Festival]...for prayers; we can provide them with lodging facilities [at the Spiritual retreat] and anything else...So make them travel to places, eat (vegetarian food).”
ORO1	“It is nice to see people coming to the Festival but it is important that they dress well when they are at the site. They need to pay respect to certain things [sacred site].”
ORO2	“When a tourist comes for the Festival, he does not need to be VIP...For example if there is a queue of 400 people, the tourist cannot jump to the front of the queue and say that he is a tourist. When he comes for pilgrimage, it must be for the purpose of the pilgrimage...he is a pilgrim, not a tourist...Now on the economic side, I cannot say much, because it is the tour operators who are benefiting. A spiritual place should remain spiritual; it should not become commercial...If a tourist, of any religion, comes for the pilgrimage, we agree.”
ORO4	“Hindu is a vast religion which welcomes and embraces the world. I mentioned earlier “Vasudeva kutumbakam”: the world is one family. So our organisation welcomes tourists of different religions...Ganga Talao is the same, so our organisation encourages the idea that tourists come as this is a unique Festival in Mauritius and cannot be found anywhere in the world...”
ORO5	“...If this small country could give an example to the whole World of how we can live together/co-exist, comprehend others and share, then how can others not do it? We tell tourists to come...and they could in return to their country as ambassadors of peace, an ambassador to instil (inculcate) the values that we have here...our organisation’s objective is to promote spiritual tourism so that the World can finally become a peace tree...when they return they are transformed and become a bit more human when they see the values...”

All the representatives of the RAs agreed that tourists not of Hindu faith should be encouraged to visit the Festival and the site. The RAs are involved in promoting the Festival and site. For

example, these are showcased in various parts of the world as interviews are delivered to TV crews (ORA2). Tourists (Hindu faith) are being sought in countries such as United Kingdom, Africa, Netherlands, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago and India (ORA3). In view of this, a spiritual retreat is being built at Ganga Talao where tourists are to be provided with catering and lodging facilities.

A Hindu believes that the world is one big family (ORO4); this is a doctrinal practice of Hinduism. It means that a Hindu will embrace any individual, irrespective of their religion, as part of his/her family. This gives an indication as to why ORO4 is not against the promotion of visits by tourists not of the Hindu faith. Tourists who are attending the Festival may benefit from it as they would learn values, in particular personal, collective and religious values, which they could then share with others in their respective countries for the advancement of a peaceful world and society (ORA5). At the same time, local Hindu participants will have the opportunity to interact with and learn from these tourists and to benefit from the cultural exchange. Such experiences resulting from 'social learning' (see Sections 4.4.4.2 and 6.2.4.2) may contribute to the 'augmented' and 'authentic' social experiences for the participants during the Festival. Likewise, the outcomes from the social experiences can benefit other local communities on the island. Consequently, there are no restrictions on who should participate in the Festival. ORA3 stated that the Festival welcomes anyone willing to participate and undertake the pilgrimage. The inclusion of other communities in the Festival can potentially help to maintain social harmony and foster the Mauritian identity.

Although the promotion of the Festival and site was not opposed, different organisations expressed concerns in terms of the behaviour of tourists not of Hindu faith at Ganga Talao and the possible commercial activities such as the selling of goods and services during the Festival. The site is not suitable for development as a commercial place (ORA1 and ORO2) as this may impact on the religious activities and the Festival itself (ORA1). ORA1 pointed out that to maintain the sanctity of the sacred site, business activities are not to be tolerated and the police are alerted when there is commercialisation as this can have undesirable consequences on the sacredness of the site and impact on the religious atmosphere. So, in effect, ORA1 agrees that they would like to have more tourists not of Hindu faith but that the site should not be commercialised in terms of the selling of items at Ganga Talao. In essence, the outcome from the possible commercialisation at the site may have adverse effects on the atmosphere (see Sections 4.4.3.2 and 6.2.3.1) and this can affect both the 'augmented' and 'authentic' religious experiences for the participants.

In regard to their behaviour, tourists not of Hindu faith need to dress properly and respect the sacred site when attending the Festival (ORO1). They should be treated equally to participants, when queuing or carrying out other activities at Ganga Talao (ORO2), otherwise this could negatively affect the religious activities undertaken by the participants and may result in conflicts. Such issues may have detrimental 'psychological' effects on the participants, and so be a threat to their religious experiences. Furthermore, they may develop feelings that the sacredness of site is being corrupted. In contrast, if the tourists not of Hindu faith observe and maintain proper ethics of behaviour during

the Festival, they may feel integrated into the local Hindu community and this could lead to the feeling of equality among all attendees on the grounds of their common humanity giving rise to a sense of ‘communitas’. As such, the sacredness and sanctity of the site would not be disturbed and the religious atmosphere would be maintained; tourists’ behaviour will therefore not influence the on-going religious activities. In return, the local Hindu participants’ image, perception and quality of the religious experiences at the site and their emotional attachment to the Festival and the site would not be at stake.

6.3.2.2 The views of the PS on tourism development

As one aspect of developing and promoting cultural tourism is to diversify the current tourism portfolio to attract 2 million international tourists by 2020, the Mauritian Government is proposing to promote religious festivals and sites to gain competitive advantage within the tourism sector (Ramkissoon and Uysal 2011; Tourism Tattler Trade Journal 2012). Box 6.9 provides the views of the PS on how the Festival and site is/might be developed and promoted for more tourists.

Box 6.9: Views of the PS on the encouragement of tourists for the Festival

PS1	<p>“We have set a special place for those people [of Hindu faith] coming from abroad and provide them with resting place...fax, telephone and medical services...we are encouraging tourists who, come and participate, and are happy; they do same as us [local participants], they do not wear shoes, wear light clothes and walk a long way. They feel that there are vibrations and spiritualism. They come and participate in kirtan and rituals...We have no restrictions on the number of people, whether tourists or not, coming to Grand Bassin...People of any religion can come...The Festival is not based on tourists; the focus is on prayers. We have seen a lot of foreigners coming, so we made a guest room for them at Grand Bassin. But at any moment we have not thought that the number of tourists will equal the number of pilgrims [local participants]...we have to make provisions. If you make provisions, then nothing is impossible.”</p>
PS2	<p>“It is not a question of Hindu or non-Hindu...someone [the tourist] ... who does not believe in religion but in spiritualism, will go everywhere. For him/her, it is clear that he/she has surpassed that level and there is no religion. It is this segment which should be developed at Grand Bassin during the Festival... don’t want others to come and watch, or have fun; don’t want it as a tourist attraction...If someone wants to participate he should come to experience it. He should put himself into it...There needs to be some sort of preparation for the pilgrimage...Prepare them, means the educational part of it...Take 1 or 2 days to prepare them about the principles of Shaivism before they participate. Then they will change their behaviours, everything. They will not be different from a [local] Hindu who is undertaking the pilgrimage...you will see from these people’s behaviour they will enrich local people they interact with...the interaction is very important, the exchange of knowledge whether cultural or spiritual. Mauritians will benefit a lot...only if it is well organised...When they come, they should be asked what they are coming to do...”</p>

Box 6.9 (continued): Views of the PS on the encouragement of tourists for the Festival

PS3	<p>“...it is very important to diversify. We are preparing Mauritius for a better tomorrow...Culture is very important...and in Mauritius we have a competitive advantage because when you look at the population, there is a rainbow of communities...And we do attract people when there are some great events like Maha Shivaratri...our tourism office does some campaigns abroad...For the Festival, it's Reunion Island and Johannesburg...During the whole week we have a lot of tourists visiting it...Well, a lot of people from other faith do attend the Festival. In Mauritius we welcome everybody, whether it is from another faith or another country. The culture is very different...any event is an excuse in marketing to attract people. [So your organisation intends to attract more tourists for the Festival in the near future?] Yeah, it is a question of tour operators who are interested in selling Mauritius for these types of events. Every year we have/we get one or two extra tour operators to sell this special event. [What is your organisation presently doing in relation to the religious site of Grand-Bassin other than promotion?] During the whole year, we bring tour operators to Mauritius and when we bring member of the media, we have a plan for sightseeing, we usually bring them there [Ganga Talao]...Visibility is through the press [Media]...Well it's up to them [tourist to participate or to observe the Festival]. In fact I am sure that if they are from the Hindu faith, they will participate, but probably if they are from another faith, they will be there just as an observer...You know, in fact, we are targeting where we have enough seats [on the plane] to attract people. You know Mauritius has a big disadvantage because we are far from everywhere except the region which is South Africa and Reunion Island...Costa Croisiere [cruise ship] is not doing Mauritius right now, but will be back as from next year in January 2015...during this period we can encourage the cruisers to go and participate in the event. [In terms of services and facilities, what does your Ministry think are necessary/priorities if there is an increase in tourism during the Maha Shivaratri festival?] There will be no increase, the number is quite stable...[Does your Ministry intend to allow more commercial spots at or around Grand-Bassin for the Festival (e.g. tourist souvenir shops, sale of items/food/cafes, etc.)?] Well, commercial spots, what do you mean? Shopping malls something like that? First of all they have to get the permit...it's quite difficult to get these permits...”</p>
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PS3 acknowledged that as part of diversifying the tourism portfolio in Mauritius, there is an attempt to use major events, such as the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri, to attract more tourists. This representative pointed out that the Festival is currently promoted to attract tourists from South Africa and Reunion Island. These tourists, mainly of the Hindu faith, participate in the Festival due to their belief. These tourists often have special treatment at the sacred site in terms of the resting place, accessing telephone and medical services (PS1). There is no restriction on the number of tourists attending the Festival (PS1) as everyone is welcomed (PS1 and PS3). In fact, the site already attracts visitors throughout the year (PS3). To increase the visibility of the site, PS1 acts as a facilitator to promote the Festival and site with tour operators and international media. To further develop the Festival and its site in the future, PS3 is of the view that cruise tourists coming to the island might be encouraged to participate in the Festival. Nevertheless, this organisation also stated that the current situation is that the number of tourists attending the Festival is quite stable. This however may change given that there will be an attempt to promote the Festival to cruise and tour operators. Either way, both PS1 and PS3 are of the view that the number of tourists will not significantly rise to an extent that would merit any concern. Provisions will be made in case this happens (PS1). The strategy of the Government of Mauritius is summarised in Table 6.11.

Contradicting PS1 and PS3, PS2 specified that spiritual tourism should be targeted as the right segment for the Festival as opposed to any other tourist coming as observers. This representative further added that tourists coming for sightseeing or having fun should be discouraged so that the Festival does not turn into a spectacle. For those who want to participate in the Festival, PS2 proposed that tourists not of Hindu faith should be educated; they should learn more about Shaivism and behave like a local Hindu participant during the Festival. For instance, tourists, like participants, should be dressed properly, remove their shoes at the site, participate in rituals and sing kirtans and religious songs for the Festival (PS1). As such, tourists will be able to understand the religious activities involved in the Festival and have the opportunity to experience a sense of *communitas* and to feel equal to the local Hindu participants. Consequently, the participants and tourists will both benefit from each other through social interactions and cultural exchanges.

6.3.3 The possible impacts of tourism development on the authentic nature of the religious experiences

This sub-section focuses on the views of the RAs on (1) the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and the site and (2) the overall authentic religious experiences, if the Festival was to be actively promoted to tourists resulting in significantly more tourists not of Hindu faith along the pilgrimage route to, and at, Ganga Talao. Furthermore, the views of the PS elaborated on how an increase in number of tourists for the Festival would affect the authenticity of experiences of the participants.

6.3.3.1 *The views of RAs on possible impacts of commoditisation on the authenticity of religious experiences*

All eight representatives of the RAs commented on the possible effects of developing the Festival for more tourists not of Hindu faith. The responses of six representatives are shown in Box 6.10.

Box 6.10: Views of the RAs on the impacts upon the authentic features and characteristics and overall authentic religious experiences

<i>No impacts on the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and site</i>	
ORA2	“...the house of God is so vast, even if you put 10 worlds here, it will accommodate it. No [it won't affect]...with only one condition [tourists observing fast, respecting the sanctity of the place and undertaking the rituals/prayers like local Hindus].”
ORA3	“No...when it is being promoted, there will be a limit to it in terms of capacity of international logistics [airplanes arriving to Mauritius]...Today we have a physical capacity of 10,000 over a period of time. It is not possible with this physical capacity to have 20,000. Even the 10,000 is not possible. There is already a limiting factor.”

Box 6.10 (continued): Views of the RAs on the impacts upon the authentic features and characteristics and overall authentic religious experiences

No impacts on the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and site	
ORO1	"No...as long as tourists do not affect them [participants] in their prayers; the pilgrims are going to do their prayers...They are not looking at tourists. They are focusing on their prayers and pilgrimage, they have nothing to do with the tourists. [Even the participants at Grand Bassin, if there is non-Hindu tourists, will they be affected?] No...effect as throughout the island there are many communities living together. We [Hindus] come across them during the journey. If a non-Hindu does not affect them, a non-Hindu tourist will also not affect them."
ORO5	"No. The tour operators and the hotels will have to warn tourists/clients that there is a tour to Grand Bassin which is a pilgrimage site for Hindus, and direct them as to how they need to behave, dress up and maintain the sacredness of the place."
Possible impacts on the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and site	
ORO2	"Yes, its authenticity should be preserved: its natural features. There need to be rules and regulations. Once the tourist is at the site which is a non-smoking zone, they should not be allowed to smoke cigar. Another thing is the way tourists dress up; tourists cannot go to Grand Bassin in bikini. Some males go in underwear because in the tour, they are wearing only their underwear...there is a need for rules and regulations...They should behave as being part of the community."
ORO4	"Yes...thinking that so many people from abroad are coming, we have to do the thing [the Festival] in the best possible way. And those who are thinking to do it in an amateur way will be corrected and helped to do it in the best possible way...we have come to a point that more and more visitors are visiting Mauritius, so this creates traffic jam. And sometimes it is created by some people not obeying the rules and regulations during the traffic hours. So, things like this, the authorities should take care and things will go smoothly."
ORA3	"Seeing the openness of Hindus compared to others, for them [participants] it has a positive aspect in the sense that others are also coming to see the Festival. There will be negative impacts if there are people who come and do not respect the values; this will evidently cause problem. So these should be avoided."
ORO2	"Yes. It will be affected. Now itself, there is not enough space. Pilgrims [participants who walk] and vehicles are moving together. If roads are not built, they will be disturbed even more."
Possible impacts on the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and site	
ORO4	"For tourists of non-Hindu faith, it won't make any difference what we [participants] are doing, but when they come from other countries, they see the...good things, they appreciate and go back.[...do you think there is something that would be lost or will change positively or negatively on the authentic religious experiences if there are more tourists coming?] Not much, because they [participants] have their mind-sets. If anything were to happen, they would concentrate on the religious aspect. Suppose those who are fasting, you put the best food in front of them, but their mind-set is that "I am fasting", so they won't touch that food. So in this way, it won't affect, except those with trivial and a weak mind...But majority won't be affected."

In regard to the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and site, all organisations, except ORO2 and ORO4, did not foresee any negative impacts if the number of tourists not of Hindu faith were to be significantly increased along the routes and at Ganga Talao. On the overall authentic religious experiences of the Festival, the general view, except for ORO2, was that these will not be adversely affected, as evidenced by the representatives of ORA3 and ORO4.

It was expected by four organisations (ORA2, ORA3, ORO1 and ORO5) that there would be no negative influences on ‘the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and site’ if there is significantly more tourists not of Hindu faith being present along the routes and at Ganga Talao during the Festival. ORA3 considered that a significant increase in the number of these tourists for the Festival seems unrealistic simply because there are limited numbers of seats/planes to Mauritius during the period of the Festival. Even achieving 10,000 tourists for the Festival could be a struggle. If there is an increase in the number of tourists not of Hindu faith, ORO1 stated that this will not affect the participants as their focus will remain on undertaking their pilgrimages and prayers (ORO1). The presence of these tourists and of other communities is not meant to distract the participants during their religious activities. Adding to this, ORO4 stated that the participants stay focused and have strong mind-sets which do not deter their overall authentic religious experiences. Being religiously committed and focused in the actual religious activities during the Festival, the participants will have the opportunity to feel close and connected to God and as a result they will not feel distracted by the presence of tourists not of Hindu faith.

Whilst ORA2 and ORO5 provided the views of their organisation as to how negative impacts on the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival could be minimised, ORA3 offered suggestions as to how undesirable impacts could be reduced so that the overall authentic religious experiences for the participants are unaffected. It was stated that tourists not of Hindu faith, like local Hindu participants, should respect the sanctity of the site, fast, pray and undertake rituals (ORA2). Furthermore, it was stated by ORO5 that the sacredness of the site should be maintained and that tourists should dress properly at Ganga Talao. If tourists do not value what is moral and/or is pertaining to the customs of Hinduism, it would negatively affect the authenticity of religious experiences for the participants, as identified by ORA3.

In relation to the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and site, ORO2 and ORO4 acknowledged that tourists not of Hindu faith would bring about undesirable consequences. Both representatives stated their concerns that these tourists would not conform to rules and regulations at Ganga Talao. These negative implications, as stated by ORO2, included the wearing of inappropriate clothes and smoking at the site. It may be argued that if tourists not of Hindu faith carry out prayers, rituals and wear white traditional clothes, fast and abstain from smoking (see Section 6.2.2.1) on ‘undertaking devotional practices’) for the Festival, there will be no disparity between the religious activities undertaken by local Hindu participants and the tourists. Similar to the participants, tourists may also experience the ‘authentic’ religious experiences at the Festival.

By undertaking religious activities, tourists not of Hindu faith may feel integrated amongst the participants and experience a sense of *communitas*. Presumably, with more of these tourists along the pilgrimage route and at the site for the Festival, they will have the opportunity to interact with the participants and consolidate temporary/permanent ties or relations with them. Consequently, both the tourists and participants will develop a sense of *camaraderie* and collective experiences.

With this in mind, the ‘authentic’ social experiences for the local participants will be enhanced. This also indicates that the presence of an increased number of tourists not of Hindu faith at the Festival will not affect the sanctity and sacredness of the Festival and site (ORA2 and ORO5), and therefore would not affect the disposition, identity and religious belief of the participants. Therefore, if the tourists conform to ‘undertaking devotional practices’, the participants’ ‘authentic’ religious experiences will not be diminished or disturbed.

Alternatively, if tourists not of Hindu faith do not conform to the devotional practices, it may have detrimental psychological effect on the participants along the route and at the site for the Festival. This may result in a feeling of dismay among the participants and can potentially result in conflicts or tensions with these tourists. As a result, the presence of an increased number of tourists not of Hindu faith may dilute the sacredness and sanctity of the sacred site thereby affecting the authenticity of religious experiences for the participants. Consequently, the participants may develop a feeling that their disposition, Hindu identity and religious belief are at risk. In order to minimise such adverse effects on the religious experiences, ORO5 proposed that tour operators and hotels should inform and educate tourists not of Hindu faith prior to their visit to the sacred site.

Noting another negative effect on the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and its site, ORO4 asserted that if there is a rise in the number of tourists for the Festival, there will be traffic jams on the way to and from the sacred site and at the site. The overall authentic religious experiences of the Festival will be endangered if more tourists are added as there is currently limited space on the road to Ganga Talao and at the site to accommodate the participants who walk and those who travel by any means of transport (ORO2). Therefore, ORO2 considered that building more roads might help to improve the overall authentic religious experiences for the participants during the Festival if there are more tourists participating in it. It is anticipated that to cater for extra vehicles, the ‘settings’ along the route and at the site would need to be improved, in particular the enlargement of roads and pavement towards the sacred site and the provision of more parking spaces at Ganga Talao. ORO2 previously pointed out in Section 6.2.3.2 that in order to cater for such development a number of trees are cut down. Consequently, such development may negatively affect the ‘atmosphere’ in terms of the flora and fauna, scenery and the spatial layout of the site (see Section 6.2.3.1). This in turn may have a negative impact on the ‘authentic’ physical experiences of the participants and their attachment to and evaluation of the Festival and the site. It is therefore important to control these changes and to preserve the atmosphere at the site to minimise undesirable impacts upon the authentic features and characteristics of the site and the Festival and the overall authentic religious experiences for the participants.

6.3.3.2 The views of PS on the possible impacts of tourism development on the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and site

All three PS representatives responded on the potential impacts upon the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and the site if the Festival was to be actively promoted to tourists resulting in significantly more tourists along the pilgrimage route to and at Ganga Talao. Their responses are illustrated in Box 6.11.

Box 6.11: Quotations of PS on the impacts upon the authentic features and characteristics

PS1	<p>"No. I think the place, as it is, is a sacred place. It will always remain sacred. People can come and go, but the place will remain sacred. If we de-mobilise all the activities from the site to 1 km away, then even 2 million people can come for the prayer at Ganga Talao, but not all at the same time. The government's vision is that any number of people can come because everything is 1 km away from the site. Maybe we can increase the access facilities then we can double the number of people coming, including tourists. We have to improve the accessibility and have easy access and exit for pilgrims."</p>
PS2	<p>"The question 'whether Hindus will accept or not' is how we approach it. If the product is 'a site where people go in mass', they need to have good behaviour. If they do not go there with a mindset of spirituality' then it is normal that people will react...If you want to go to a sacred site, you should behave, you have ways of doing things; you cannot go there to picnic and eat sausages. Once you enter the site, you should be clear on what your behaviour should be and what is the type of clothes you should wear because you cannot go there in bikini or topless. All this is something which should be looked at, and not wait for this to get worst. All this should be explained prior to the visit. It should be clear, and people should respect it otherwise they will vulgarize the site or make it a commodity. This can't be a commodity; it should remain authentic. There is no compromise. We give certain facilities like toilet, shower and so on, which have to be provided because people are making long trips; this is another thing. But apart from this, no compromise, no compromise. Either you go or you don't. If we want to promote the Festival, the tourists must already have a mindset of what they are going to do. Even those tourists who are already coming need 2-3 days preparation...You must go there, after bathing and so on. These sorts of tourists are completely different...Then the people will benefit...People [Tourists] are looking for this value-added which cannot be given to them...But this one [the Festival] gives a lot [value-added]"</p>
PS3	<p>"I am sure in the future we will have more and more, but it would be positive...Won't be a problem."</p>

PS1 and PS3 indicated that there will be no negative impact on the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and the site. PS3 added that the impact, if any, will be positive. Although PS2 also agreed that there will not be any impact if tourists have good behaviour when visiting the sacred site, this representative indicated that problems may arise if they do not go there with a spiritual mind-set.

Both PS1 and PS2 identified the sacred site as being authentic. By indicating that there will be no impact, PS1 added that Ganga Talao will remain sacred despite an increase in the number of tourists. Moreover, this representative indicated that in order to accommodate an increase in the number of tourists, up to double the number of participants, the 'settings' need to be increased

considerably so that accessibility is improved for easy access and exit of car and for participants who walk. PS1 also proposed that vehicles be parked at least 1 km from Ganga Talao, ensuring that more people can access the site, albeit by foot. This will limit further development of parking spaces within 1 km of the sacred site which will limit undesirable consequences on the flora and fauna, scenery and the spatial layout at or around the site. As such, this will not only preserve the authentic features and characteristics of the site and the Festival but also preserve the participants 'authentic' physical experiences at, and around, the sacred site.

On the negative impacts upon the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and the site, PS2 indicated that if tourists do not go to Ganga Talao with a spiritual mind-set, this may create problems for the participants. Similar to the views of the RAs, this organisation also shared concerns about tourists not conforming to rules and regulations at Ganga Talao, for example by eating non-vegetarian food or wearing inappropriate clothes like a bikini at the site. It may be argued that if these tourists wear appropriate clothes and abstain from eating non-vegetarian food as a form of 'making a personal sacrifice', it will show that the tourists are 'undertaking devotional practices' (see Section 6.2.2.1) and respecting the sanctity of the site and not treating it as a mere commodity. By behaving like a participant at the sacred site, tourists will be less likely to affect the authenticity of religious experiences. Similar to ORO5 from RA, PS2 also proposed that tourists should be informed prior to their visits about these long-established behaviours to mitigate any detrimental impacts on the religious experiences of the participants. This will also ensure that the features and characteristics of the site remain authentic, as stated by PS2. Additionally, tourists, who are on the lookout for 'value-added', get to experience something new. By fully adopting the ways of the participants, for instance by preparing 2 to 3 days prior to the Festival, or bathing before going to the site, the tourists gain 'authentic' religious experiences similar to the participants, and this is a 'value-added' which they can only experience for the Festival.

6.3.4 The impacts of the possible perceived outcomes from the development of the Festival and site on the Hindu residents

This section has two parts. Firstly, it outlines the views of the representatives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the 'Public Sector' organisations (PS) as to what changes would be acceptable from an increase in the number of tourists for the Festival. Secondly, it provides views as to whether these stakeholders expect any tensions or conflicts to arise between participants and tourists resulting from an increase in the number of tourists for the Festival.

6.3.4.1 The trade-off between the benefits and the undesirable consequences resulting from an increase in the number of tourists

The interviewees were asked about their organisation's views as to what changes, resulting from an increase in the number of tourists, would be acceptable for the Festival, given that while there may be benefits there may also be undesirable consequences. Both the RAs and the PS provided their views to this question.

6.3.4.1.1 The views of RAs on the acceptable changes resulting from an increase in the number of tourists

Seven representatives responded on the changes that would be acceptable and the responses of five organisations are given in Box 6.12.

Box 6.12: Views of the RAs on the acceptable changes

ORA2	"Question does not arise...We are not making Maha Shivaratri a business ceremony...And it should never be done...The focus is Shiva; the focus is divine."
ORA3	"Simple. This is a question of prediction and prevention...things to avoid and things to be encouraged...do a register of such things, and limit those who are in the business of bringing foreigners by requiring them to broadcast and communicate [these limitations to tourists]. Because if there are problems, it will not look good and it will create bad publicity. [Can you cite some examples that are not acceptable?] It is simple: what the Hindu himself avoid. First of all, he should fast, he should eat vegetarian, he should not drink alcohol, and he should not bring Kentucky and Phoenix beer there. So (1) it is the perceptible, visible things. (2)he goes there with respectable clothes. And when he goes there, without causing annoyance to anyone: he doesn't say that because he..."
ORA3	"... is foreigner he should go first, not because I am a foreigner I should keep my car here. So the observance of the general rules that are present and applicable to everyone. He is part of it, he has to respect."
ORO2	"Yes...The consequences will take effect from here itself, because when the tourists will come, the roads are already congested, pilgrims are walking, as the roads are congested for 2-3 hours. If the Government has thought of bringing more tourists, they should think about giving facilities. They cannot just bring people when the site is already small. This is our objective...to ask for a separate road for pilgrims and vehicles...This is the main thing, infrastructure. If there is no infrastructure, there will be problems."
ORO3	"No. When tourists are coming to Mauritius, may it be 2 times, 3 times or 4 times [more in number], when they are coming to Grand Bassin, it is a plus for us because in the spiritual sense it is a plus. We are not a closed religion. Today we see that when a tourist is looking for hotels, he says he wants to participate at Grand Bassin. There are tourists guides who will tell him... Now when tourists are in the hotel, they ask what they should do to participate in the Festival. They will tell him 'you have to fast for 2 or 3 days i.e. not to eat non-veg food'. It is a plus for us. When the tourists are coming to Grand-Bassin, they have fast for 2 days, they themselves will feel lighter, spiritually. As long as they come here, it is better for us."
ORO5	"No at any point, it will not be harmful...No, the future development should work hand in hand with the green economy."

Only ORO2 agreed that changes would be acceptable at, and around, Ganga Talao such as improving the road infrastructure as there are concerns about traffic problems. Similar issues were previously discussed by ORO4 (see Section 6.3.3.1). With a high influx of tourists for the Festival, it is inevitable that this will cause further delays for participants getting to Ganga Talao, adding to the existing road congestion as a result of participants who walk to and from the sacred site and other participants travelling by means of transport. If more tourists will attend the Festival, facilities should be provided and there is a need to improve road infrastructure (ORO2). They proposed that the Government should build separate roads for pilgrims and vehicles. These changes may be considered to potentially help minimise the negative impacts of tourism on the participants. However, these changes may impact on the 'authentic' physical experiences for the participants as discussed earlier in Section 6.3.3.1. A rise in the number of tourist attending the Festival may cause interruption and delays for the participants in carrying out their religious activities at Gang Talao. Being in a long queue to perform the religious activities, the participants may feel disheartened as their focus would be in waiting for their turn to carry out their rituals rather than focusing on Lord Shiva; this wait may adversely affect their 'authentic' religious experiences.

On a positive note, ORO3 and ORO5 stated that with an increase in the number of tourists, there will be no undesirable consequences but instead the consequences will be positive. In fact, the more tourists participate in the Festival, the more spiritual benefits it will bring (ORO3). It is believed that in return tourists would also benefit by having a better understanding and appreciation of the Festival and the Hindu culture. As the Festival is a religious festival as opposed to a commercial one, the focus remains on Lord Shiva, and therefore, according to ORA2, the question of acceptable changes did not even arise. ORA1, in Section 6.2.3.1.1, shared similar views that the site is not a commercial one. In fact, commercial activities at the site would affect the sacredness and sanctity of the place and this will deter the authentic experiences for the participants.

Although ORA3 did not foresee undesirable consequences, this representative provided insights into the changes on how tourists should behave at the site and prior to attending the Festival. Similar views as to how tourists should behave at the site for the Festival were already discussed in Sections 6.3.2.1 and 6.3.3.1. However, specific examples were provided in this case by ORA3 who stated that tourists, like the participants, should be treated equally, be respectful and they should not drink alcohol/beer and eat KFC, any non-vegetarian food, at Ganga Talao. Also, both ORA3 and ORO3 stated that tourists must fast prior to attending the Festival at the site. In essence, they believe that tourists should abide by the norms at the sacred site, as does any other participant. For this to be functional, guides or personnel in hotels should advise the tourists on how the Festival is celebrated by the participants. In connection with this, ORA3 also identified the dos and don'ts for the tourists so that the Festival not only run smoothly but also do not get bad publicity.

6.3.4.1.2 The views of PS on the acceptable changes resulting from an increase in the number of tourists

The views of PS1, on what changes would be acceptable for the Festival from an increase in the number of tourists given that while there may be benefits there may also be undesirable consequences, are illustrated in Box 6.13.

Box 6.13: Views of the PS on the acceptable changes

PS1	<i>"The Mauritian Hindu community is more focused on religious aspects rather than other economic [benefits]. When you see the tourist aspect, it means that you are getting foreign exchange. They [tourists] come here, they spend a lot of money, but for the Festival, people are not so much interested in that [Economic benefits]. Specially the Hindus, they are more focused on prayers, not on other aspects."</i>
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PS1 stated that the focus is on prayers, i.e. on the religious aspects and not on the economic benefits of tourists during the Festival. So, this representative was not concerned about the resulting/expected changes as it was not seen as important. This means that an increase in the number of tourists was seen as not having any effect on the Festival as the participants are not concerned with how much money tourists are contributing to the local economy or where they are spending their money but instead their focus is on the religious activities such as carrying out their prayers at Ganga Talao. Thus, an increase in the number of tourists will not affect the participant's religious experiences.

6.3.4.2 The views of the stakeholders on any tensions that may arise between the participants and tourists

The interviewees were asked if their organisation expected any tensions (conflicts) to arise between the local Hindu residents and tourists if there was a significant increase in the number of tourists for the Festival. Both RAs and PS gave an insight as to whether or not they anticipate any potential tensions to arise.

6.3.4.2.1 The views of the RAs on anticipated tensions to arise between the local Hindu participants and tourists

All the RAs responded to this question. The views of five representatives are displayed in Box 6.14.

Box 6.14: Views of the RAs on any possible tensions between local Hindu residents and tourists

ORA2	“...tourists may be anyone; so far they are coming as Shiv devotees, so they are coming as pilgrims. It does not make any difference [to God] because god is not restricted to a community. God is for everyone. If you are making that Festival a commercial one, for some negative purpose or for benefits such as to have economic boost, to have this and that, then it will have consequences.”
ORA3	“...if tomorrow we find 2000 people coming [non-Hindus], it poses a problem...as long as we are not having extremists coming as tourists... then ... it's the country's problem...No tension as long as they conform [to what is expected of any participant] and they do not go against precepts. There should be no reasons to have any quarrels. And if they do not observe these - they go against the precepts - they are not going to create tension, but uneasiness. It is different, uneasiness. And maybe the law and order will have to intervene. And it's not going to be a Hindu affair, but a Law and Order affair. It should be in the hands of those in law and order. No, those in law and order are present every year there [at the site] for everybody even for the Hindu. If there is something outside the frame, it would be for them [those in Law and Order] to take action, not just for the Hindus.”
ORO1	“No, we will not let it reach to this point. We will sort the problem before it arises. We shall be proactive. We shall impose a control on the number of tourist cars which enter the site during the Festival. They [the tourists] can see the Festival, they can see the pilgrimage from anywhere and they can see the procession. But at Ganga Talao, if the number [of tourists] is increased such that it affects the pilgrimage, then we will not let it reach to this point. Yes, even if tourists are walking, we can control this. One way to control this is when tourists come for the Festival at Ganga Talao, they can walk from Petrin, for about 3km; they should walk. [So, he participates, he experiences it?] Yes.”
ORO2	“Yes of course there may even be fighting. For example, on the physical aspect, the way of dressing up, the way of talking because those who fast have a way of dressing up. Vehicles also can contribute to confrontation, or even lead to fighting. [If any tensions arise, how should these be dealt with?] It is for the Government to see how to do it. Only one suggestion, not only for us, but the society... a separate road has to be constructed for the pilgrims and vehicles. This is final, there is nothing more than this.”
ORO3	“Never. We will stop it and we will not tolerate that. [How will it be regulated?] No, we have ways. There itself there are journalists, radio and so on...”

None of the representatives speaking on behalf of their organisations, except the representative for ORO2, foresaw tensions/conflicts between Hindu residents and tourists. Conflicts will be unlikely if tourists respect customs and traditions and that if ever there are conflicts, this will not “...create tension, but uneasiness...” which will warrant the intervention of police officers, as stated by ORA3. Therefore, this points to the fact that conflicts will be unlikely as long as the participants’ religious experiences are not affected. Moreover, those who acknowledged that there would be no conflict also stated that circumstances that could create tensions include situations where extremists of other religions visit the site (ORA3) or if the Festival is commercialised for economic gain or for other purposes (ORA2). Tensions or even fights could arise from inappropriate language, inappropriate clothing or from people not following traffic codes during the Festival (ORO2). According to ORO2, the solution would be for the Government to deal with any tension arising during the Festival. This representative also proposed that there is a need to build other roads leading to the site so that vehicles and participants who walk travel on separate routes thereby improving the flow of traffic. Other solutions to resolve issues were proposed by ORO1 and ORO3.

For example, a solution is to impose restrictions on the number of tourist cars entering Ganga Talao or to impose that tourists should park their cars 3 km away from the site and walk to the site, so that this does not affect the pilgrimage (ORO1). Another solution is to regulate possible conflicts by communicating to the public through “*journalists, radio and so on*” (ORO3).

6.3.4.2.2 The views of PS on anticipated tensions to arise between the participants and tourists

All the three representatives of PS shared their views and these are provided in Box 6.15.

Box 6.15: Views of the PS on any possible tensions between local Hindu residents and tourists

PS1	“No. Our country is multi-ethnic. I don’t think tourists are ‘third parties’ who would interfere in the normal business of the Festival. Tourists are welcomed here, they would be allowed to [visit]; otherwise it can create havoc. [If any tensions/ conflicts arise, how should these be dealt with?] This is at the government level: policy of the government. It’s a decision the government will take saying that such areas should not allow too many [tourists]...and then they can control...Tourists are usually in different hotels, so you give different times for different hotels. You allocate, and then this will not affect anything. If all tourists converge at the same time on the same day, this will create problems. It needs planning.”
PS2	“Even if the number of tourist increases, it will not cause any conflict. I do not see any negative impacts. On the contrary, if the interaction and the exchange are done properly, this will benefit as these people who are coming are not ignorant, they have experiences and they already possess a high level of spirituality, otherwise they would not have come as a religious tourist; they would not have been interested. In case the site is developed as a spiritual site, as it is expected to be, there is a need for a professional managerial body with permanent employees on the site. During the Festival there won’t be any issue, but there may be a problem at the site outside the Festival period to maintain order and to make sure there is no degradation and vandalism. It has to be professionally managed...”
PS3	“Well the number is still quite ok...it is an issue. But if one day, we have more tourists than Mauritians (than local people), then probably yes. But won’t happen... If they start misbehaving, we will stop targeting tourists to come. Because respect is very important.”

All three representatives from the PS indicated that there will be no tensions between local Hindu residents and tourists. In fact, tourists will bring about positive outputs, on the personal experiences of the participants, by imprinting their good values on the participants (PS2). Moreover, this representative called for the need to appoint a professional managerial body with full-time employees at the sacred site not only to maintain order but also make sure that there is no degradation and vandalism. In the event of tensions, PS1 suggested that the Government should deal with it, for example by limiting the number of tourists at certain touristic places or by allocating different times for hotels that organise trips to Ganga Talao during the Festival. PS3 even proposed to stop targeting tourists for the period of the Festival if they misbehave.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter identifies the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) and its site from the perspectives of both the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and 'Public Sector' organisations (PS). Three themes emerged from the analyses of these stakeholder interviews. The first theme was the 'authentic' religious experiences (thought to arise from 'undertaking devotional practices'). In regard to this theme, the findings show that the type of clothes worn by the Hindu participants for the Festival is expected to connect them with their religion and identity. The second theme was 'authentic' physical experiences (expected to be triggered by the 'atmosphere' and 'place dependence and attachment'). Specific determinants were identified as part of the physical environment at Ganga Talao that are thought to be crucial for the Hindu participants to carry out their rituals. The third theme focused on the 'authentic' social experiences (the theme arose from 'dynamic and active participation', 'facilitating participants' participation', 'Hindu identity' and 'social learning'). The constituent Hindu identity within the theme 'authentic' social experiences is likely to be experienced throughout the Festival as the participants are thought to have the opportunity to meet and undertake collective religious activities with others within the four components of the Festival.

Overall, both sets of stakeholders have provided insights as to what they potentially considered to be the authentic features of the Festival and its site, which by implication, would be among the reasons for attracting tourists. The themes and associated constituents that have emerged also need to be safeguarded if the Festival and its site are commoditised. As commoditisation is likely to occur during the journey to and from Ganga Talao component and the visit to Ganga Talao component, research findings of this chapter will be further discussed in *Chapter 8*.

This chapter also covered the views of the RAs and PS on (1) the encouragement of tourists not of Hindu faith to attend the Festival and its site, (2) the perceived outcomes of an increased number of tourists on the authentic nature of the religious experiences and (3) the perceived possible outcomes/broader impacts that may result from the development of the Festival. Firstly, the findings show that both sets of stakeholders were in favour of promoting the Festival and site for more tourists not of the Hindu faith but with caveats. The RAs had no objection with such a move as the Hindus are expected to believe in the doctrinal practice of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*', that is the world is one big family. They therefore embrace any individual, irrespective of their religion, as part of their family. However, there are concerns that tourists may not adhere to certain behaviours, as would a Hindu participant, and thus undermine the religious nature and authenticity of the Festival. Secondly, the qualitative findings indicate that all except two members of the RAs and all the representatives of the PS agreed that there would be no negative impacts on the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* if the number of tourists were to increase significantly along the pilgrimage routes and at Ganga Talao. This is because the Hindu participants are thought to carry out their pilgrimages and prayers as they would normally do. Nevertheless, there were concerns in

terms of tourists not adhering to rules and regulations at Ganga Talao, for example by not wearing appropriate clothes and eating vegetarian food. These behaviours from tourists may potentially result in conflicts or tensions with the local Hindu participants. However, the findings of this chapter show that if tourists not of the Hindu faith consider carrying out similar religious practices and behaving like a Hindu participant, they would feel integrated amongst the Hindu participants and experience a sense of *communitas*. Thirdly, in regard to the perceived possible outcomes/broader impacts that may result from the development of the Festival, the study identifies a number of practical actions in the event that the Festival is further promoted and this results in an increased number of tourists. For instance, the provision of better roads, parking and other infrastructure would be needed. However, overdevelopment would have detrimental effects on the religious values, meanings and authentic characters of the site. In addition, it was thought that the Government of Mauritius should consider educating tourists on the do's and don'ts at the site. As a result, the sacredness and sanctity of the site and Festival would not be a deterrent. Also, this study shows that the participation of more tourists in the Festival is expected to enhance the spiritual benefits of the Festival for both locals and the tourists. Tourists not of the Hindu faith are thought to come to better understand and appreciate the Festival and the Hindu culture while at the same time local Hindus are expected to have a range of 'authentic' social experiences.

The next chapter continues with the focus on authenticity and commoditisation but from the point of view of the local Hindu participants in the Festival.

CHAPTER 7: THE ATTITUDES OF MAURITIAN HINDU RESIDENTS ON THE AUTHENTICITY AND COMMODITISATION OF THE FESTIVAL AND SITE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter, *Chapter 6*, explored the views of two sets of stakeholders, the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the ‘Public Sector’ organisations (PS), on (a) the perceived *authentic nature of the religious experiences* of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) and site and (b) the perceived possible impacts of promoting and developing the Festival and site in order to increase the number of tourists who are not of the Hindu faith.

This chapter focuses on the identification of the features of the Festival and site that are considered, by Mauritian Hindu residents who had participated in the Festival, to be authentic and important to be maintained and not lost. Thus, *Chapter 7* has two objectives:

- 1 To analyse the overall attitudes of the local Hindu respondents in regard to (a) the level of importance attached to the activities that contribute to the authentic character of the Festival and (b) the level of agreement with statements on the perceived impacts of a significant increase in the number of tourists on the authenticity of the Festival.
- 2 To explore whether or not there are differences between males and females in their attitudes towards (a) the perceived authenticity of religious experiences generated through their participation in the Festival and (b) their level of agreement as to the perceived potential effects on the religious experiences that may result from an increase in the number of tourists attending the Festival and site.

Based on these objectives, this chapter has two sections. Firstly, it starts by identifying the level of importance attached to the activities that contribute to the authentic character of the religious experiences during the Festival and at the site. Secondly, it analyses the respondents’ attitudes towards the possible effects that may occur from commoditising the Festival and site are presented. For each of these two sections, as indicated in Sections 3.5.3 and 5.1, the respondents’ gender is used as the independent variable.

In both of the sections the overall results are initially presented in a hierarchical table based on the median values of the evaluation of the statements presented to the respondents. Then, the results of

the Mann-Whitney U test for difference between gender and the respondents' evaluation of the statements are provided. Two hypotheses were formulated in respect of testing for differences:

- H0 (the null hypothesis): there is no statistically significant difference between the male and female respondents in relation to their perceptions of authenticity and their level of agreement on the acceptable losses resulting from commoditisation.
- H1 (the alternative hypothesis): there is a statistically significant difference between the male and female respondents in relation to their perceptions on authenticity and the level of agreement on the acceptable losses resulting from commoditisation.

To test the null hypotheses, the Mann-Whitney U test was performed.

7.2 ATTITUDES OF THE MAURITIAN HINDU RESPONDENTS IN RELATION TO THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES GENERATED BY THE FESTIVAL

7.2.1 Background

The respondents were provided with a list of fifteen statements and were asked how important each was in contributing to their view of the authentic character of the Festival during their last participation. A four-point Likert item rating scale was used with '1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Less Important and 4=Not Important'. The evaluation of the statements assists in assessing (a) which features of the Festival are perceived as important in bringing about the authenticity of the character of the Festival and (b) which activities need to be preserved if commoditisation of the site and Festival were to take place.

7.2.2 Hierarchy of the level of importance of the contribution of each to the authentic character of the Festival

Of the fifteen statements, eleven related to the activities which respondents undertook, two were associated with the site and the remaining two were in terms of the joint activities the respondents carried out alongside other Hindus during the Festival. A median ranking score of the activities which the respondents undertook is provided in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Overall median based on the level of importance attached by the respondents to the contribution of each of the activities they undertook to the authentic character of the Festival

<i>Activities</i>	Overall Median Value
Fasting in preparation for, and during, the period of the Festival.	1.00
Making an offering at the lakeside.	1.00
Collecting the sacred water from the lake.	1.00
Pouring the sacred water on the Shivling for the Char Pahar ki Pooja.	1.00
Actively participating in the Char Pahar Ki Pooja (e.g. making offerings to the Shivling).	1.00
Being close to the 108 feet Lord Shiva statue (Mangal Mahadev) at Ganga Talao.	2.00
Experiencing self-penance during the journey due to the fatigue and hardship involved.	2.00
Visiting other temples during the journey.	2.00
Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying) at Ganga Talao.	2.00
The wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes during the journey.	2.00
Carrying a Kanwar during the journey.	3.00

Out of the eleven activities, five were acknowledged as being ‘Very important’ and another five were scored as ‘Important’ as indicated by overall median values of 1.00 and 2.00 respectively. One, ‘carrying a Kanwar during the journey’ was ranked as ‘Less important’, as given by an overall median value of 3.00.

Overall the results demonstrate that all activities, excluding the one ranked as ‘Less important’, represent the core activities which contribute to the authenticity of religious character of the Festival. Therefore, if these activities are challenged by increasing tourism numbers, it could potentially affect their perceived existential authenticity of religious experiences offered by the Festival. In contrast, ‘carrying a Kanwar during the journey’ was less important indicating that the respondents did not consider this activity as indispensable for the Festival. However, carrying the Kanwar may not be important to many people, as they have no desire to carry one, it may be highly important to those who do carry a Kanwar and to the authenticity of the Festival.

A median ranking score of the statements related to aspects of the site is given in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Overall median based on the level of importance attached by the individual to the contribution of two aspects of contributing the site to the authentic character of the Festival

<i>Physical environment at the site</i>	Overall Median Value
The sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, camphor and incense burning) at Ganga Talao.	1.00
The natural environment (e.g. landscape) around Ganga Talao.	2.00

The respondents identified the sacred atmosphere at the sacred site to be ‘Very important’ to the authentic character of the festival, as denoted by an overall median value of 1.00 while the natural environment at Ganga Talao was ‘Important’, as indicated by a median of 2.00.

The results show the sacred atmosphere at the site was more important compared to the natural environment at Ganga Talao. Although the natural environment was important, special care should be given to the preservation of the sacred atmosphere when it comes to the physical environment at the site, as it contributes more towards the authentic character of the Festival for the respondents.

Table 7.3 gives the median ranking score of the statements related to the joint activities of the respondents with other Hindus during the Festival.

Table 7.3: Overall median based on the level of importance attached by the individual to joint activities with other Hindus to the authentic character of the Festival.	
<i>Joint activities</i>	Overall Median Value
The hospitality of other Hindus who provided free food and drink, toilets and bathing facilities during the journey.	2.00
Having a collective experience with other Hindus at Ganga Talao.	2.00

The respondents indicated that both joint activities were ‘Important’, as indicated by overall median values of 2.00. The joint activities refer to the authentic collective social experiences the respondents experienced alongside other Hindus at the Festival. The joint activities were given equal importance in relation to the authentic religious character and so, these merit the same consideration, if tourism development is encouraged.

7.2.3 The level of importance attached to the activities of the Festival by male and female Hindu respondents

The Mann-Whitney U test was carried out to establish whether there was a difference between male and female respondents in their evaluation of the importance of the contribution of each of the fifteen aspects of the festival to the authentic character of the Festival. The result showing significant difference by gender can be found in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4: The level of importance attached by the respondents to the contribution of the activities they undertook to the authentic character of the Festival – significant differences by gender								
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Carrying a Kanwar during the journey.	Male	191	3.00	178.06	15673.5	-2.260	0.024	0.12
	Female	188	3.00	202.13				
	Total	379	3.00	-				

For only one activity, ‘carrying a Kanwar during the journey’ ($p = 0.024$ with small effect size $r = 0.12$), was the null hypothesis rejected. This shows that there is a statistically significant difference by gender and the level of importance attached to the contribution of carrying a Kanwar the authentic character of the Festival, with male respondents more likely to consider that ‘carrying a Kanwar during the journey’ was more important to the authentic character of the Festival than female respondents. This is indicated by a lower mean rank value for male respondents.

The results which show no significant difference in terms of the level of importance of activities carried out during the Festival to the authentic character of the Festival for respondents, by gender, are presented in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5: The level of importance attached by the respondents to the contribution of each of the activities they undertook to the authentic character of the festival – no significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Fasting in preparation for, and during, the period of the Festival.	Male	205	1.00	201.86				
	Female	206	1.00	210.12				
	Total	411	1.00	-	20266.0	-0.836	0.403	-
Collecting the sacred water from the lake.	Male	206	1.00	198.04				
	Female	205	1.00	214.00				
	Total	411	1.00	-	19475.5	-1.770	0.077	-
The wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes during the journey.	Male	205	2.00	204.32				
	Female	205	2.00	206.68				
	Total	410	2.00	-	20770.0	-0.218	0.827	-
Making an offering at the lakeside.	Male	205	1.00	200.94				
	Female	204	2.00	209.08				
	Total	409	1.00	-	20078.5	-0.780	0.435	-
Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying) at Ganga Talao.	Male	205	2.00	195.90				
	Female	204	2.00	214.15				
	Total	409	2.00	-	19044.0	-1.725	0.084	-
Being close to the 108 feet Lord Shiva statue (Mangal Mahadev) at Ganga Talao.	Male	202	2.00	201.95				
	Female	199	2.00	200.03				
	Total	401	2.00	-	19906.5	-0.176	0.861	-
Pouring the sacred water on the Shivling for the Char Pahar ki Pooja.	Male	200	1.00	198.79				
	Female	200	1.00	202.21				
	Total	400	1.00	-	19658.0	-0.369	0.712	-
Visiting other temples during the journey.	Male	200	2.00	189.91				
	Female	199	2.00	210.14				
	Total	399	2.00	-	17882.5	-1.853	0.064	-

Table 7.5 (continued): The level of importance attached by the respondents to the contribution of each of the activities they undertook to the authentic character of the festival – no significant differences by gender

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Experiencing self-penance during the journey due to the fatigue and hardship involved.	Male	201	2.00	202.71	18549.5	-0.892	0.372	-
	Female	194	2.00	193.12				
	Total	395	2.00	-				
Actively participating in the Char Pahar Ki Pooja (e.g. making offerings to the Shivling).	Male	194	1.00	189.85	17915.5	-1.015	0.310	-
	Female	195	1.00	200.13				
	Total	389	1.00	-				

For the activities in Table 7.5, there were no statistical differences by gender and therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, both males and females were likely to give equal importance to these ten activities in contributing to their authentic character of the Festival.

For the two statements relating to aspects of the site, as presented in Table 7.6 below, there was no statistically significant difference between males and females in relation to their assessment of the contribution of both aspects of the site to the authentic character of the Festival. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that the male and female respondents attributed the same level of importance to the aspects of the site in terms of its contribution to the authentic character during the Festival.

Table 7.6: The level of importance attached by respondents to the contribution of two aspects of the site to the authentic character of the Festival – no significant differences by gender

<i>Physical environment at the site</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
The sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, camphor and incense burning) at Ganga Talao.	Male	205	1.00	204.86	20880.5	-0.219	0.827	-
	Female	206	1.00	207.14				
	Total	411	1.00	-				
The natural environment (e.g. landscape) around Ganga Talao.	Male	201	2.00	198.89	19676.0	-0.401	0.689	-
	Female	200	2.00	203.12				
	Total	401	2.00	-				

Table 7.7 presents the results for the two statements relating to joint activities with other Hindus. The results indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between males and females in terms of their assessment of the contribution of joint activities to the authentic character of the Festival. The null hypothesis was not rejected. This shows that both male and female respondents view joint activities as of similar importance to the character of the Festival.

Table 7.7: The level of importance of joint activities with other Hindu for the authentic character of the Festival – no significant differences by gender

<i>Joint activities</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
The hospitality of other Hindus who provided free food and drink, toilets and bathing facilities during the journey.	Male	205	2.00	198.29	19533.5	-0.974	0.330	-
	Female	201	2.00	208.82				
	Total	406	2.00	-				
Having a collective experience with other Hindus at Ganga Talao.	Male	199	2.00	189.85	17879.5	-1.955	0.051	-
	Female	201	2.00	211.05				
	Total	400	2.00	-				

7.3 ATTITUDES OF THE MAURITIAN HINDU RESPONDENTS TOWARDS THE COMMODITISATION OF THE FESTIVAL AND SITE

7.3.1 Background

This sub-section has three parts. It highlights the attitudes of the respondents towards the commoditisation of the Festival and site, their level of agreement on the effect of more tourists on the overall religious experiences and the economic benefits of having more tourists for the Festival. Each sub-section deals with one question in the questionnaire.

7.3.2 The possible impacts of commoditisation on the Festival and site

7.3.2.1 *Hierarchy of the evaluation by the respondents of their agreement with a series of statement on the possible outcomes from an increase in tourists at the Festival and site*

The overall median ranking of the respondents' level of agreement on the potential outcomes of a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival is shown in Table 7.8. For this question, the level of agreement was measured through a four-point Likert item rating scale with '1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree'.

Table 7.8: Overall median of the level of agreement relating to the potential outcome from an increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival

<i>Potential outcomes</i>	Overall Median Value
If more tourists resulted in improved infrastructure (e.g. roads, pavements, toilet facilities) I would welcome this.	2.00
I would not wish to see the presence of more tourists resulting in the commercialisation of 'en-route' services (e.g. food distribution become payable), accommodation and refreshment provision.	2.00
I would not want increased numbers of tourists to result in increased numbers of hawkers selling both religious and non-religious items at Ganga Talao.	2.00
If, when observing the Festival, tourists are respectful of our Hindu heritage in the way they behave and dress then there is no problem.	2.00
I would not want an increased number of tourists to turn the Festival into a 'spectacle' for tourists.	2.00
I would not want to see tourists at Ganga Talao interfering with the devotees' ability to perform the necessary religious rituals (e.g. collecting water and worshipping Lord Shiva).	3.00
I would be concerned that increased numbers of tourists would reduce the social benefits shared and enjoyed by Hindu participants during the Festival.	3.00

The respondents agreed, denoted by an overall median value of 2.00, on five potential outcomes. If there was a significant increase in the number of tourists at the Festival, the residents would agree with improved physical facilities (e.g. roads, pavements, toilet facilities) but not with the commercialisation of 'en-route' services, an increase in the number of hawkers selling items at the sacred site, tourists being disrespectful in the way they behave and dress at the site and lastly turning the Festival into a 'spectacle'.

The respondents indicated that they disagreed with the remaining two of the potential outcomes, denoted by a median value of 3.00. For both these potential outcomes, the respondents do not find it problematic to have tourists at the site either while they would perform their rituals or in terms of the social benefits they share with other Hindu participants during the Festival. This indicates that they would not be against tourists' participation in the Festival and the benefits resulting from the social and collective experiences with other local Hindu participants would not be deterred by the presence of tourists.

7.3.2.2 The level of agreement for male and female respondents with regard to the potential outcomes from an increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival

The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to investigate the difference in the answers given by males and females. The focus was on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the potential outcomes of a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival. For each statement, a four-point Likert item rating scale with '1=Strongly

Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree' was used. The results, with significant differences, are given in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9: The level of agreement relating to the outcome from an increase in tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival – significant differences by gender

<i>Potential outcomes</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
I would not want increased numbers of tourists to result in increased numbers of hawkers selling both religious and non-religious items at Ganga Talao.	Male	198	2.00	179.78				
	Female	190	2.00	209.84				
	Total	388	2.00	-	15896.0	-2.764	0.006	0.14

For only one potential outcome, 'I would not want increased numbers of tourists to result in increased numbers of hawkers selling both religious and non-religious items at Ganga Talao' ($p = 0.006$ with small effect size $r = 0.14$), the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a statistically significant difference by gender of the respondents and their level of agreement on this potential outcome, with the lower mean rank score indicating that males were more likely to agree with this potential outcome than female respondents.

Table 7.10 shows the responses for the remaining six potential outcomes.

Table 7.10: Level of agreement on the potential outcomes from an increase in tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival to the Festival – no significant differences by gender

<i>Potential outcomes</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
If, when observing the Festival, tourists are respectful of our Hindu heritage in the way they behave and dress then there is no problem.	Male	199	2.00	198.22				
	Female	196	2.00	197.78				
	Total	395	2.00	-	19459.0	-0.042	0.966	-
If more tourists resulted in improved infrastructure (e.g. roads, pavements, toilet facilities) I would welcome this.	Male	198	2.00	200.56				
	Female	195	2.00	193.38				
	Total	393	2.00	-	18600.0	-0.689	0.491	-
I would not want an increased number of tourists to turn the Festival into a 'spectacle' for tourists.	Male	190	2.00	191.07				
	Female	194	2.00	193.90				
	Total	384	2.00	-	18158.5	-0.261	0.794	-

Table 7.10 (continued): Level of agreement on the potential outcomes from an increase in tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival to the Festival – no significant differences by gender

<i>Potential outcomes</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
I would not wish to see the presence of more tourists resulting in the commercialisation of 'en-route' services, (e.g. food distribution become payable), accommodation and refreshment provision.	Male	186	2.00	186.99	17389.0	-0.458	0.647	-
	Female	192	2.00	191.93				
	Total	378	2.00	-				
I would not want to see tourists at Ganga Talao interfering with the devotees' ability to perform the necessary religious rituals (e.g. collecting water and worshipping Lord Shiva).	Male	185	3.00	186.99	17388.0	-0.366	0.714	-
	Female	192	3.00	190.94				
	Total	377	3.00	-				
I would be concerned that increased numbers of tourists would reduce the social benefits shared and enjoyed by Hindu participants during the Festival.	Male	188	3.00	187.90	16657.5	-0.459	0.646	-
	Female	182	3.00	183.02				
	Total	370	3.00	-				

For these statements, the null hypothesis is not rejected as there was no statistically significant difference by gender and the extent to which the respondents agreed or disagreed with these potential outcomes in respect of a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what is happening at the Festival. This implies that males and females are likely to share relatively similar attitudes towards these potential outcomes from a significant increase of tourists for the Festival.

7.3.3 The possible impacts of commoditisation on the overall religious experiences

7.3.3.1 Hierarchy of the outcomes from an increase in tourist numbers on the overall religious experiences

The respondents were asked to choose their level of agreement with statements about the effect of a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival on their religious experiences. These statements explored whether the respondents agreed, or not,

on the effects of commoditisation on the respondents' overall religious experiences during the Festival. For each statement, a four-point Likert item rating scale with '1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree' was used. A median ranking score analysis for the seven statements is given in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11: Overall median of statements on the level of agreement on the effects of a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival on the respondents' overall religious experiences

<i>Statements</i>	Overall Median Value
Infrastructure development to accommodate increased tourist numbers at Ganga Talao may cause changes to the site which, by changing the sense of place, will adversely affect my overall religious experience.	2.00
More commercial provision for tourists along the pilgrimage routes would dilute the sacred atmosphere and this would negatively affect my religious experience.	2.00
More tourists are likely to cause congestion along the pilgrimage route and thus will have an adverse effect upon my overall religious experience.	3.00
More tourists visiting Ganga Talao at the time of the festival will reduce my ability to perform the necessary religious rituals (e.g. collect water and worship Lord Shiva), and this would negatively affect my religious experience.	3.00
More tourists will adversely affect the overall ambience of the walk and this will impact negatively upon my religious experience.	3.00
More tourists will be a threat to my ability to meditate upon God(s) and upon my own religious values and life.	3.00
More tourists will be a threat to the sacredness of Ganga Talao and therefore to my religious experience.	3.00

Overall, the respondents disagreed with five statements indicated by a median value of 3.00 in Table 7.11. This means that respondents disagreed with the propositions that more tourists would lead to congestion, would affect the ability to carry out rituals, would adversely affect the ambience along the way to and from Ganga Talao, would be a threat to my ability to meditate, and would be a threat to the sacredness of the site.

In contrast, the respondents agreed that firstly infrastructure development may cause changes to the site and sense of place and secondly commercial provision along the pilgrimage routes may dilute the sacred atmosphere, thereby negatively affect my overall religious experience. These two statements are denoted by a median of 2.00.

7.3.3.2 Differences between male and female respondents in relation to the effect of a significant increase in the number of tourists on the religious experiences

The Mann-Whitney U test, investigating the difference by gender and the level of agreement on the effect of a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival on the religious experiences, was conducted. A four-point Likert item rating scale with

‘1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree’ was used. The results showing significant differences are illustrated in Table 7.12.

Table 7.12: The level of agreement concerning a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival on the religious experiences – significant differences by gender

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
More tourists will adversely affect the overall ambience of the walk and this will impact negatively upon my religious experience.	Male	196	3.00	184.02				
	Female	194	3.00	207.10				
	Total	390	3.00	-	16762.5	-2.248	0.025	0.11
More commercial provision for tourists along the pilgrimage routes would dilute the sacred atmosphere and this would negatively affect my religious experience.	Male	191	2.00	173.30				
	Female	186	3.00	205.12				
	Total	377	2.00	-	14764.5	-2.957	0.003	0.15

Of the seven statements, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed that for two statements, denoted by the *p* value being less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a statistically significant difference between gender and level of agreement, for the two statements, in terms of the effect of a significant increase in the number of tourists on the overall religious experiences of the respondents. Based on the lower mean rank score, the male respondents were relatively more likely to think that ‘more commercial provision for tourists along the pilgrimage routes would dilute the sacred atmosphere and this would negatively affect my religious experience’ (with small effect size $r = 0.15$) and ‘more tourists will adversely affect the overall ambience of the walk and this will impact negatively upon my religious experience’ (with small effect size $r = 0.11$) compared to female respondents. For both these statements, it is perceived that the intangible attributes of the environment, particularly the sacred atmosphere and the ambience, along the pilgrimage route will be affected by the presence of tourists.

The results where there were no significant differences by gender are illustrated in Table 7.13.

Table 7.13: The level of agreement concerning a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival on the religious experiences – no significant differences by gender

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
More tourists visiting Ganga Talao at the time of the festival will reduce my ability to perform the necessary religious rituals (e.g. collect water and worship Lord Shiva), and this would negatively affect my religious experience.	Male	198	3.00	191.57				
	Female	198	3.00	205.43				
	Total	396	3.00	-	18229.0	-1.321	0.186	-
More tourists will be a threat to my ability to meditate upon God(s) and upon my own religious values and life.	Male	198	3.00	189.98				
	Female	193	3.00	202.18				
	Total	391	3.00	-	17914.5	-1.182	0.237	-
More tourists will be a threat to the sacredness of Ganga Talao and therefore to my religious experience.	Male	196	3.00	188.64				
	Female	192	3.00	200.48				
	Total	388	3.00	-	17668.0	-1.128	0.259	-
Infrastructure development to accommodate increased tourist numbers at Ganga Talao may cause changes to the site which, by changing the sense of place, will adversely affect my overall religious experience.	Male	200	2.00	186.57				
	Female	188	2.00	202.94				
	Total	388	2.00	-	17214.0	-1.511	0.131	-
More tourists are likely to cause congestion along the pilgrimage route and thus will have an adverse effect upon my overall religious experience.	Male	198	3.00	189.71				
	Female	188	3.00	197.49				
	Total	386	3.00	-	17862.0	-0.735	0.463	-

For the statements in Table 7.13, the null hypothesis is not rejected as the results are not significantly different. This implies that for these statements, the respondents, irrespective of their gender, were more likely to share similar attitudes on their overall religious experiences.

7.3.4 The possible economic benefits of tourists for the Festival

7.3.4.1 Hierarchy of the economic benefits from having more tourists

The respondents were asked as to their level of agreement on whether it was worth potentially losing some of the ‘religious/spiritual’ atmosphere of the Festival to gain the economic benefits of having more tourists, and thereby more tourist spending. For each statement, a four-point Likert item rating scale with ‘1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree’ was used. The results of a median ranking score analysis for the eight statements are given in Table 7.14.

Table 7.14: Overall median of whether in order to gain the economic benefits of having more tourists, and thereby more tourist spending, it is worth potentially losing some of religious/spiritual atmosphere of the Festival by providing each of the developments.	
<i>The developments that might adversely affect the religious experience</i>	Overall Median Value
More cleaning staff to keep the sacred place clean at all times.	1.00
More infrastructural development (e.g. pavement, toilet facilities) at Ganga Talao.	2.00
More parking facilities at Ganga Talao.	2.00
More parking facilities along the pilgrimage routes.	2.00
Making provision so that the ‘spectacle’ of the festival can be better observed.	2.00
More food and drink outlets at Ganga Talao.	3.00
More shopping facilities at Ganga Talao.	3.00
More hotel and guest house facilities at Ganga Talao.	3.00

The respondents opted for ‘strongly agree’, denoted by an overall median value of 1.00, for potentially losing some of ‘religious/spiritual’ atmosphere of the Festival in order to gain the economic benefits of having more tourists, in relation to ‘providing more cleaning staff to keep the sacred place clean at all times’. This indicates that the aspect of cleanliness at the sacred site is a primary concern of the respondents.

The four statements with an overall median value of 2.00 were those for which the respondents indicated that they were likely to ‘agree’ to losing some of religious/spiritual atmosphere of the Festival in order to gain the benefits. They would agree, that for tourist numbers to be increased they would agree with improving the infrastructure, increasing the parking, and making provision that would allow the spectacle of the Festival to be better observed.

Meanwhile, the respondents disagreed with losing some of religious/spiritual atmosphere of the Festival by allowing ‘more food and drink outlets at Ganga Talao’, ‘more shopping facilities at Ganga Talao’ and ‘more hotel and guest house facilities at Ganga Talao’. These relate to the commercialisation possibilities which involve others, including individuals and companies alike, profiting by selling products at Ganga Talao.

7.3.4.2 Level of agreement, by gender, on the exchange of some religious/spiritual atmosphere of the Festival in order to secure the possible economic benefits from having more tourists

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to investigate the differences by gender in relation to the level of agreement on whether it was worth potentially losing some of religious/spiritual atmosphere of the Festival to gain the economic benefits of having more tourists and thereby more tourist spending. A list of eight statements were provided to the respondents for them to identify the costs they were prepared to bear in exchange for the benefit of more tourists spending. A four-point Likert item rating scale, with options ‘1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree, 4=Strongly Disagree’ was used to evaluate the statements. The results where there were no significant differences, by gender, are shown in Table 7.15.

Table 7.15: The economic benefits of further developments to serve tourists – significant differences by gender

Costs of developments	Gender	N	Median	Mean Rank	U	z	p	r
More food and drink outlets at Ganga Talao.	Male	199	3.00	207.05	16308.0	-2.419	0.016	0.12
	Female	189	3.00	181.29				
	Total	388	3.00	-				
More hotel and guest house facilities at Ganga Talao.	Male	198	3.00	214.04	15337.0	-3.504	0.000	0.18
	Female	192	3.00	176.38				
	Total	390	3.00	-				

There were statistically significant difference by gender and the level of agreement on the advantages of having more tourists in terms of ‘more food and drink outlets at Ganga Talao’ ($p = 0.016$ with small effect size $r = 0.12$) and ‘more hotel and guest house facilities at Ganga Talao’ ($p = 0.000$ with small effect size $r = 0.18$), for which the null hypothesis was rejected. The lower mean rank score indicates that the female respondents were more likely to agree on these two statements than the male respondents. In other words, while the male respondents were less likely to want to compromise on their religious/spiritual benefits by providing additional outlets and other accommodation facilities at Ganga Talao, the female respondents apparently considered improved accommodation and catering facilities would not result in an unacceptable loss of authenticity.

Table 7.16 presents the results with no significant differences.

Table 7.16: The economic benefits of further developments to serve tourists – no significant differences by gender

Costs of developments	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
More cleaning staffs to keep the sacred place clean at all times.	Male	205	1.00	199.16	19713.5	-0.941	0.347	-
	Female	202	1.00	208.91				
	Total	407	1.00	-				
More infrastructural development (e.g. pavement, toilet facilities) at Ganga Talao.	Male	204	2.00	203.52	20192.0	-0.194	0.846	-
	Female	200	2.00	201.46				
	Total	404	2.00	-				
More parking facilities at Ganga Talao.	Male	203	2.00	197.39	19364.0	-0.492	0.623	-
	Female	196	2.00	202.70				
	Total	399	2.00	-				
More parking facilities along the pilgrimage routes.	Male	201	2.00	197.70	19436.5	-0.150	0.881	-
	Female	195	2.00	199.33				
	Total	396	2.00	-				
Making provision so that the 'spectacle' of the festival can be better observed.	Male	201	2.00	194.55	18803.0	-0.183	0.855	-
	Female	189	2.00	196.51				
	Total	390	2.00	-				
More shopping facilities at Ganga Talao.	Male	201	3.00	206.82	17925.5	-1.614	0.107	-
	Female	195	3.00	189.93				
	Total	396	3.00	-				

The null hypothesis is not rejected for the remaining six statements since there is no significant difference between Hindu males and Hindu females as to their level of agreement on the advantages of having more tourists. This implies that for these statements both genders shared similar views as to what they want to preserve at the site.

7.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter starts by assessing which activities contribute to the authenticity of the religious experiences for the Mauritian Hindu respondents. If these activities are not preserved and maintained, as a result of any tourism development, this could potentially affect the existential authenticity of the local Hindu participants' religious experiences.

This study has used the existential form of authenticity, derived from Wang's (1999) typology, to understand the feelings of an individual that arise during an activity. The findings of this chapter identified specific religious activities that influence the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* for the respondents. In addition, the findings show that the physical and social contexts in which these activities take place also contribute to, or influence, the authenticity of the religious

experiences, see Tables 7.2 and 7.3 respectively. The quantitative findings of this chapter complement the broader themes and constituents that emerged from the interviews with the Mauritius Religious Authorities (RA) and the 'Public Sector' organisations (PS) in *Chapter 6*. The adoption of a mixed methods approach in this research has therefore helped in better understanding the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* offered by the Festival for the local Hindu participants that has to be preserved if the Festival and site are further commoditised. The findings of both *Chapters 6 and 7* will be discussed in the following chapter, *Chapter 8*. Another contribution of this study is that the concept of authenticity was explored from the local residents' perspectives of the Festival. This is not often the case as this concept is mainly used in tourism studies by scholars and researchers.

This chapter has also assessed the respondents' attitudes towards the possible effects and outcomes of Governmental policies to significantly increase the number of tourists, (commoditising the Festival and site) on the perceived religious experiences. Overall, the local Hindu respondents are in favour of having more tourists at the Festival and its site. However, the local Hindu participants expressed concerns on the commercialisation of 'en-route' services, the tourists being disrespectful in the way they behave and dress at the site, the Festival being turned into a 'spectacle' and an increase in the number of hawkers selling items at Ganga Talao, see Table 7.8. These worries were also expressed by the RAs and PS in the previous chapter. The Hindu respondents disagreed with losing some of religious/spiritual atmosphere of the Festival by allowing 'more food and drink outlets at Ganga Talao', 'more shopping facilities at Ganga Talao' and 'more hotel and guest house facilities at Ganga Talao'. These findings will be integrated with the qualitative findings and discussed in *Chapter 8*.

The next chapter, *Chapter 8*, will critically evaluate the theoretical underpinnings of the study and the four findings chapters in relation to the literature.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to critically evaluate the nature of the religious experiences offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) to the Mauritian Hindu participants and their perceptions of the possible impacts on these religious experiences resulting from any future commoditisation of the Festival and its site.

The aim of this chapter is to critically review and discuss the key research findings of the qualitative and quantitative research in terms of similarities and differences in the attitudes of the different stakeholders - the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA), the local Hindu residents (Festival participants) and the 'Public Sector' organisations (PS) - in the light of previous theories, research and practices from the existing literature. The empirical findings from this study together with the conceptual framework (see Figure 2.2) are incorporated to develop a theoretical model, that is grounded in Levitt's (1981) typology and Kotler's (1994) conceptualisation of the three levels of product, that enhances our knowledge and understanding of the nature of the religious experiences sought and gained by Mauritian Hindus during the Festival.

This chapter has three main sections. First, Section 8.2 discusses the main qualitative and quantitative findings of *Chapters 4 and 5* on the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival. Second, Section 8.3 provides a discussion of the key findings of *Chapters 6 and 7* on the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* and possible future impacts of further commoditising the Festival and its site. Finally, the initial conceptual framework is revisited in Section 8.4 to include the empirical findings of the research for this Thesis.

8.2 THE NATURE OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

8.2.1 Background

The complex nature of the religious experiences offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) was studied and analysed through the three levels of religious experiences model (see Figure 2.3). This sub-section starts with a review of the attitudes of two sets of stakeholders, the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the local Hindu residents/participants, on the overall *core religious experiences* offered by the Festival. The sub-section that follows is a discussion on the religious experience offerings embedded within the *actual Festival product*: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja. Thereafter, the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* of the Festival is investigated.

The views of only the RAs and local participants are considered in this section because the RAs provided the views of their organisation on the religious experiences offered by the Festival to the local Hindu participants. While the RAs are/were involved in delivering, managing and advising on the Festival and its site, the local Hindu participants are the consumer of the religious experiences and their views help to assess what activities contributed to their religious experiences. The views of the PS were not investigated as they had no religious/cultural intents in the Festival.

8.2.2 The overall core religious experiences

8.2.2.1 An overview of the core religious benefits offered by the Festival

This sub-section discusses the findings arising from the research conducted with two sets of stakeholders, the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the local Hindu participants, on the overall *core religious experiences* offered by the Festival, as outlined in Sections 4.3 and 5.4.2 respectively. These stakeholders have varying goals and interests in the Festival. Through their involvement in the Festival, they are able to achieve their overall desired benefits. As illustrated in Section 2.6.5, the *core religious experiences* relate to the main religious benefits or outcomes the participants seek to gain, or gain, through their participation in the Festival. In fact, every festival, irrespective of its size, types or complexities, generates a variety of experiences from which the attendees derive the benefits they seek in order to satisfy their desired needs and wants. The religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri offers both religious and non-religious experiences and associated benefits to the participants. In other words, some participants have specific pious interests in the Festival, and they seek 'genuine' religious benefits, whilst others are in pursuit of non-religious benefits that tend to be more leisure - or socially - oriented. Due to the inherent religious characteristics of the Festival, the core religious benefits are the existential religious benefits which are sought and gained by participants to fulfil their religious obligations and goals. This aligns with the religious tourism and pilgrimages literature in that the studies on religious tourism concentrate mainly on the spiritual experiences while ignoring the restorative, educational or social experiences, despite the fact that religious tourists or visitors seek a diverse range of experiences and benefits when visiting a religious site (Bond et al. 2015; Bond 2015).

8.2.2.2 The benefits offered by the Festival from the perspectives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities

The qualitative findings have provided in-depth and rich insights into what the RAs perceived to be the *core religious experiences* sought by the local Hindu participants during the Festival. The overall key objectives of the religious authorities are to perpetuate and bolster religious, cultural and traditional values amongst the Mauritian Hindu community (see Section 3.6.2.4). The Festival serves as a medium for the RAs to promote and propagate Hinduism and its belief systems. These organisations provide key facilities and services to the local Hindu community ensuring the

significance of the Festival is maintained (see Section 4.2). Therefore, they play a key role in the planning, management and delivery of ‘satisfying’ religious experiences to the participants.

The RAs gave the views of their organisation in respect of what they considered the Festival offered to the participants in terms of the core religious benefits derived from their *core religious experiences*. The four core religious benefits, captured as themes from the analyses of the RAs’ interviews in Section 4.3, were ‘closeness and connectedness to God’, ‘self-purification’, ‘self-transformation’ and ‘self-actualisation’, as shown in Figure 8.2. The RAs identified that during the Festival the participants accomplished their divine duties and their sought benefits of (a) being merged with Lord Shiva, (b) being purified and cleansed, (c) being transformed during and after the religious activities performed and (d) fulfilling their personal religious goals. The findings of this study reveal that partaking in the Festival provides profound religious benefits to the participants. According to the RAs, attendance at the Festival is regarded as a demonstration of the participant’s belief, devotion, commitment and adoration to the Supreme Being in the Hindu Pantheon, Lord Shiva. The types of devotional/religious practices that the participants undertake influence their *core religious experiences* and associated benefits from the Festival. The benefits that emerged, from the analyses of the interviews with the RA stakeholders, are discussed below in relation to the tourism and pilgrimage literature pertaining to the Hindu religion.

Closeness and connectedness to God	Self-purification	Self-transformation	Self-actualisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling of being: immersed with Lord Shiva, connected to Him through the deep involvement in prayers • Experiencing vibration, deep meditation • Carrying out devotional or religious practices such as collecting or offering sacred water, listening to religious songs and praying to Lord Shiva or Hailing Him • Using of religious items to cleanse the Shiving • Influenced by the participants’ religious demographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking self-penance through: fasting, observing celibacy, abstaining from smoking and drinking, worshipping and walking in different weather conditions • Emotions: feeling happiness and joy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A change in the mindset; a change in one’s growth and development • Positive involvement to: be better human being, be more confident, be uplifted, learn new values such as being preached by priests, listening to religious discourses, learning from other activities/about oneself, being able to undertake task and challenges, Positive emotions: feeling different sensations triggered by sound at the site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling: satisfied, the pleasure through sacrifices, accomplished, enriched by positive feelings, self-fulfilled, achieved, complete, vibrations in the temple • Going through a ‘rebirth’ or renewal: getting rid of shortcomings and cleansing body and mind • Deep and intense involvement

Figure 8.1: The overall core religious experiences and benefits offered by the Festival from the perspectives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities

The RAs considered that the participants went through a phase of transition leaving behind their mundane lives and spaces to develop a transcendental connection with Lord Shiva and to experience Him (see Section 4.3.3). In return, Lord Shiva bestows His blessings upon the participants and absolves participants from their sins and misdemeanours (see Section 4.2.3). These echo with other Hindu pilgrimage studies in terms of the pilgrims being connected to the divine

(Singh 2013; Singh and Haigh 2015) or being engaged with the Spirit (Buzinde et al. 2014; Hopkins et al. 2015) to feel the benefits of being purified and freed from sins (Gopal and Dubey 1990; Singh 2002; Trono 2015). To experience the connectedness with Lord Shiva and to gain the subsequent existential benefits of being spiritually cleansed, the RAs indicated that a number of devotional rites, rituals and activities were performed by the participants, as outlined in Sections 4.2.4, 4.3.2, 4.3.3 and 4.3.4. These religious practices carried out by the participants conform to the literature on research into pilgrimages, festivals and sacred sites pertaining to the Hindu traditions and religion (see Sections 2.2.2.1, 2.2.3.2, 2.2.4.2, 2.2.5.1 and 2.3.3.4). However, the literature also suggests that cleansing can also be achieved through ritual bathing which, in Hinduism during pilgrimages and/or at sacred sites, is a means of being purified from sins and uniting with the deity (Morinis 1992; Lochtefeld 2010; Jacobsen 2013; Buzinde et al. 2014; Hopkins et al. 2015; Griffin and Raj 2017). The research of this Thesis adds new data to the literature in that participants in the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri gain these benefits during the Festival although they do not take a dip in the sacred lake at Ganga Talao. That said, the local Hindus do sprinkle the holy water on themselves prior to their prayers as a sign of purification (Dayal no date) as they consider Ganga Talao to have the same symbolic meaning as that of the Ganges River in India (Tiwari 2017); this not only frees them from impurities but also makes them feel closer to the deity.

The qualitative findings of this study also complement the literature by identifying that ‘closeness and connectedness to God’ and ‘self-purification’ contributed to the participants’ experience of ‘self-benefit’. First, the participants are considered by the RAs to have benefitted from feeling ‘closeness and connectedness to God’ through meditating, listening to religious songs, collecting the sacred water and carrying out prayers (see Section 4.3.3). This relates to the basic/normal devotional practices that help the participants to uphold and renew their existing Hindu belief systems. Second, the RAs were of the view that the participants benefitted from ‘self-purification’ by being involved in a higher level of commitment, challenge and voluntary austerity such as walking to and/or from Ganga Talao in different weather conditions to fetch the sacred water, taking part in the Char Pahar ki Pooja, refraining from certain food, alcoholic drinks and smoking and practising celibacy. Such practices were seen to not only purify the participant’s body and mind but also to lead to self-discovery as he/she learns about the limitations of his/her body and about his/her inner self (see Sections 4.2.4 and 4.3.2). Both ‘closeness and connectedness to God’ and ‘self-purification’ were considered to be vital by the RAs in fulfilling the existential religious goals and benefits of the participants. In fact, the innumerable practices embodied in the Festival allow the participants to benefit from the connection to Lord Shiva (self-renewal) and being cleansed (self-discovery). According to Buzinde et al. (2014), participants at other Hindu religious festivals who carried out activities such as taking a bath in the sacred river Ganges, meditating, worshipping and/or taking *darshana* (to see and to be seen by God and religious experts) felt they were merged with the Spirit and gained spiritual knowledge as well as forgiveness. However, the findings of this Thesis do not fully resonate with the findings of Buzinde et al. (2014) in that activities like worshipping Lord Shiva and meditating are basic devotional practices (by default) which when

performed by participants lead to establishing a bond with the Supreme Being and to feel self-renewed. This research therefore makes a clear distinction between the types of devotional/religious practices performed by participants and the nature of the benefits they seek to achieve through such performances.

Another core religious benefit sought by participants, according to the RAs, relates to ‘self-transformation’ (see Section 4.3.4). Taking part in the different sets of devotional/religious practices allows the participants to practice and perpetuate their traditional beliefs, culture, values and after all their religion. The Festival is in fact a passage of devotional practices whereby disciples gain self-transformational benefits, inducing positive changes in their mind-sets. For instance, they believe that the Festival has the experiential power of cleansing their sins and as a result they have a new mind-set making them more inclined to behave well and to do good things. The research findings from the analyses of the RAs’ interviews are consistent with previous Hindu pilgrimages and sacred sites literature (for example, Singh 2006, 2013; Sax 1991) showing that an individual gains the benefits of being transformed, i.e. feeling his/her soul is purified and getting rid of his/her daily crises, when carrying out a pilgrimage (Bhardwaj 1983; Buzinde et al. 2014) and rituals (see Sections 2.2.4.2 and 2.2.5.1). The findings of this Thesis indicate that self-transformation, according to the RAs, is not limited to a change from something negative to something positive in the life of a participant. Participants also had the opportunity to undergo self-transformational experiences by gaining new religious knowledge and values and by feeling uplifted. According to Buzinde et al. (2014), participants achieve spiritual knowledge either by listening to discourses of spiritual leaders or by interacting with them at the sacred space during the Kumbh Mela pilgrimage. The findings of this study of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri partly match with the findings of Buzinde et al. (2014) in that the RAs considered that the participants who have listened to religious discourses have gained self-transformational benefits by gaining new religious values and knowledge. In doing so, they were able to construct their own existential meanings for their own ‘inner’ spiritual growth. However, the findings differed from that of Buzinde et al. (2014) as spiritual growth was not, according to the RAs, attained by participants through interactions with religious experts. Arguably, such knowledge gained is socially constructed through interaction between the individual and the spiritual leaders/saints at the sacred space. It is a ‘social-oriented’ benefit that triggers a transformation of the self. However, the social aspect was not considered in this section as part of the *core religious experiences* which look upon an existential constructed religious perspective with no social interaction contamination.

The ‘self-actualisation’ benefit is last of the four themes that emerged from the analyses of the RAs’ interviews (see Section 4.3.5). The RAs indicated that when the participants accomplished their religious duties and obligations, they felt self-actualised and this evoked an existential sense of achievement and purpose in their lives/beings. One essential result of this study is that the Festival, in particular the prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja (see Section 1.2.3.2.4), puts a participant on the right path of attaining the four legitimate goals of a Hindu life, which embodies the concepts of

dharma (righteous deeds such as proper actions and ethics), *artha* (material happiness), *kama* (family life) and *moksha* (liberation from the life and death cycle). These four aims of life are deeply rooted in the Hindu mythology (see Sections 2.2.2.1 and 4.2.3) and are attained by performing the four-tier prayer of the Char Pahar ki Pooja (Hawoldar and Argo 2005). According to Hawoldar and Argo (2005, p.118), this prayer “*purifies the mind, the intellect, consciousness and the ego*”. This means that a participant who performs the Char Pahar ki Pooja is thought to feel an existential sense of completeness, as he/she desires for a higher purpose and a deeper meaning of spiritual life, finds his/her inner self and feels self-purified and self-transformed. These prayers, according to the RAs, embody all the benefits one can acquire and is therefore the most valued and ultimate pursuit of spirituality for those of the Hindu faith. Whilst several scholars have explored topics on Indian pilgrimages and sacred sites in the Hindu religion (for example, Bhardwaj 1983; Sax 1991; Morinis 1992; Singh 2002; Davidson and Gitlitz 2002; Singh 2006, 2013; Shinde 2007; Lochtefeld 2010; Jacobsen 2013; Buzinde et al. 2014; Singh and Haigh 2015; Aukland 2018), limited research has valorised the experiential power and benefits of rituals performed during religious festivals and pilgrimages and at sacred sites in the Hindu religion. The result of this study is new in that the *core religious experiences* and benefits acquired as part of the Char Pahar ki Pooja, embodied in a religious and pilgrimage festival, offers a participant the opportunity to find his/her true and deep sense of ‘religious’ self and to be on the righteous path of a Hindu life.

The qualitative findings indicated that the ultimate goal for the participants is to collect the sacred water, pray with it and bring it home. In conducting these religious duties and obligations, a festival participant feels accomplished and fulfilled; this gives rise to the self-actualisation benefits. In fact, those who prefer walking gain the same benefits, as those using transport, in terms of reaching their religious and spiritual goals and feeling self-satisfied for having completed their journey, albeit by transport, to the site and back home. The walk has been a tradition since Pandit Jhummon Giri Napal Gossagne dreamt of the lake and he, along with his friends, walked to and from the site (see Section 1.2.3.2.3). It is therefore seen as a personal choice and it does not affect one from procuring the self-actualisation benefits. As such, the participants experience the benefits of ‘self-purification’, ‘closeness and connectedness to God’ and ‘self-transformation’ benefits, irrespective of their mode of travelling - walking or traveling by other means to and/or from Ganga Talao (see Sections 4.2.4, 4.3.2, 4.3.3 and 4.3.4). These benefits, sought by the participants, align with the literature as highlighted in Section 2.2.4.

Overall, the discussion on the qualitative results from the RAs’ interviews provides a wider perspective as to what the RAs considered the Festival was offering as main benefits to the participants and were derived from the *core religious experiences* (the activities performed by the local Hindu participants during the Festival). According to this set of stakeholders, the benefits sought by the participants are subjective and vary from individual to individual based on the types of devotional/religious practices performed during the Festival. Additionally, the findings in Section 4.3.3 demonstrate that the religious demographics - the religious foundation, characteristics

and background of a person - of a participant influences the way he/she perceived the Festival and his/her level of commitment that affect his/her *core religious experiences* and associated benefits. The Festival was considered by the RAs to be a means for participants to move away from their daily routine life in the pursuit of pious-related experiences and benefits to satisfy their overall desired religious duties and obligations. Through their involvement in the Festival, the participants felt close to Lord Shiva, self-purified, self-transformed and self-actualised. These are the core religious benefits that the Festival was considered to offer to the participants that underpin the essence of the Hindu religion clustered around moral principles, dogmas and the upholding of their *Dharma* (religious duties). The importance and significance of the Festival, as given by the RAs (see Section 4.2), is that it is an opportunity for the participants to gain the desired core religious benefits thus helping them to practice their Hindu religion and its teachings as well as through experiencing the doctrines, religious beliefs, norms and the different religious activities.

8.2.2.3 Integrating the quantitative results with the four types of benefits

The quantitative research of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri examined specific elements of the core religious benefits that were gained by participants during their participation in the Festival. The participants evaluated sixteen statements based on a five-point Likert item rating scale, with the options '(1) Not at all, (2) A little, (3) Moderately, (4) Quite a bit and (5) Entirely', that closely reflected their personal feelings the last time they participated in the Festival (see Section 5.4.2). Of the sixteen statements, ten were religious-related benefits gained by the participants through their involvement in the Festival in order to fulfil their religious obligations and goals. From Table 5.40, the participants rated eight personal religious outcomes ('attained personal salvation', 'made a personal sacrifice', 'increased my self-knowledge', 'renewed spiritually', 'experienced self-renewal', 'been purified', 're-affirmed my faith and belief', 'found meaning in my life' and 'gone through hardship for my faith') as 'quite a bit' and the remaining two ('found meaning in my life' and 'gone through hardship for my faith') as 'moderately'. Overall, participants gained strong religious feelings (with an average mean value of 4.00 for all the ten statements) during their participation in the Festival.

This indicates that the annual and century-old Festival offers them a range of existential religious experiences and associated benefits to fulfil their desired religious need and wants. The Mann-Whitney U test, performed on these ten statements, revealed that while there was no statistically significant difference by gender in terms of the personal feelings attached to participating in the Festival for nine statements (see Section 5.4.2.2), there was statistically significant difference by gender of participants, where the null hypothesis is rejected, for only one statement, 'making a personal sacrifice' (a weak effect size $r = 0.10$), with the males more likely than females to attach personal feelings to making a personal sacrifice, for example undertaking the walk. In the literature on religious participation, there is more emphasis on women being involved in the community and giving importance to aspects of caring and community in respect of their religious experiences

(Furseth and Repstad 2006). Furseth and Repstad (2006) added that women tend to highlight aspects of family and personal relationship. Therefore, making a personal sacrifice, like undertaking the walk for women, could mean giving less time to their children and husband. This may be a reason why males were more likely to make a personal sacrifice than females. Also, the finding of this Thesis supports this view in that women would tend to favour relationship, with 203 out of 206 women attending the Festival with family and friends (see Section 5.2.2.2). In the literature, constraints to undertaking a pilgrimage include family disapproval (Holden 2005) or even commitment to look after elderly parents (Hsu et al. 2007).

The ten statements, evaluating the personal feelings of the participants, can be encapsulated into the four broader themes/benefits of the RAs ('closeness and connectedness to God', 'self-purification', 'self-transformation' and 'self-actualisation'), as seen in Figure 8.2. In order to avoid repeating previous commentaries and references from the tourism and pilgrimage literature pertaining to the Hindu religion, as discussed on the four core religious benefits emerged from the RAs' perspectives, the quantitative findings reflect a broader spectrum of literature, including the Hindu and non-Hindu context of festivals and pilgrimages.

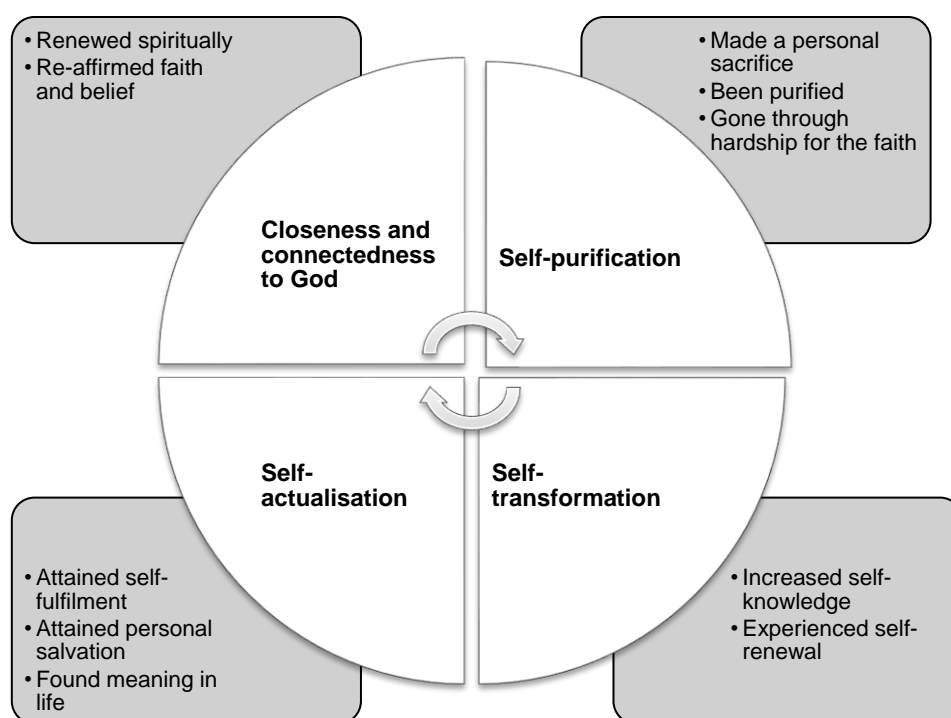


Figure 8.2: The overall core religious benefits for the local Hindu residents

The Festival is a religious/spiritual quest and awakening for the participants. It promotes a range of 'inner' religious benefits that give an overall sense of purpose to the participants' lives. By participating in the Festival, the participants implicitly show their religious intentions and interests in the Festival. During Lord Shiva's celebration, participants gained the 'closeness and connectedness to God' benefits by immersing themselves into several traditional practices, customs and rites. The participants' main religious purposes were to renew and strengthen their spiritual

connection to the Supreme Being and their existing faith and belief. The quantitative research findings of the study are in accordance with the tourism and pilgrimage literature in that a pilgrimage is an existential pursuit and spiritual sustenance (Cohen 1979; Cohen 1992 b) whereby pilgrims maintain connection to the divine (Turner and Turner 1978; Digance 2003; Ambrosio 2007; Andriotis 2009; Klimova 2011; Warfield 2012) or the visitors feel close to God (Shuo et al. 2009; Țîrca et al. 2010; Nyaupane et al. 2015; Terzidou et al. 2017) in view of being spiritually renewed and strengthening their faith and/or belief (Gesler 1996; Collins-Kreiner and Kliot 2000; Shuo et al. 2009; Țîrca et al. 2010; Liutikas 2015). Participants were mainly involved in the Festival for religious reasons; these included expressing their belief, seeking blessings and carrying out core religious activities such as praying/worshipping God and collecting the sacred water (see Section 5.2.2.3).

Some of the activities carried out by the participants brought about the ‘self-purification’ benefits to them, for instance when they left behind their daily routine life and crises to undertake the pilgrimage, either by undertaking the strenuous walk or by using other modes of travel to and from Ganga Talao to fetch the sacred water (see Section 5.2.3.2.1). Those who preferred walking did it mainly for ‘religious and cultural’ reasons and ‘to make a personal sacrifice’ (see Section 5.2.3.2.2). In fact, the Festival provided them with the opportunity to purify and cleanse themselves and to show their level of commitment and sacrifice by paying reverence to Lord Shiva. Similar findings were revealed in Kasim’s (2011) study on the Malaysian Thaipusam festival where local adherents went through a cleansing process by carrying out rituals for a month and by meditating frequently and by abstaining from smoking, alcohol and sex. That festival involves a three days’ procession where devotees accompany the statue of Lord Muruga (a Hindu God) that make them pay reverence to the deity and feel closer to Him. Subject to undertaking the purification rituals, the local Malaysian participants felt renewed, freed from sins, and forgiven. The research for this Thesis on the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivatatri furthered the findings of Kasim (2011) in that the results of the RA interviews indicated that the level of purification depends on the types of devotional/religious practices performed by participants, for example fasting, observing celibacy, abstaining from smoking and drinking alcohol, and worshipping Lord Shiva more frequently, walking, amongst others. In contrast, the quantitative results showed that participants felt that the level of hardship they undertook for the Festival was only average (an overall mean value of 3.00 – ‘moderately’). Nevertheless, similar to the RAs, the participants felt that the Festival offered them both ‘self-transformation’ and ‘self-actualisation’ benefits, for instance the participants felt their self-knowledge was broadened and they experienced self-renewal that evoked the transformational experiences and benefits. The participants also indicated that by participating in this annual religious and pilgrimage festival, and by performing specific related religious acts, they had the opportunity to engage with their Hindu belief systems and traditions, thus renewing their inherent values. Both these specific elements, gained by participants from attending the Festival, align with the literature in that a pilgrimage is a transformational journey filled with personal meaning (Digance 2006; Shepherd 2015) whereby an individual experiences spiritual transformation (Lee

and Gretzel 2013), enhances his/her personal knowledge (Collins-Kreiner and Kliot 2000; Țîrca et al. 2010; Amaro et al. 2018) and feels a change in his/her feelings from negative to positive (Das and Islam 2017) that allows him/her to find his/her new true self (Buzinde et al. 2014), thus bolstering his/her religious identity (Lean 2009). Having attained their religious goals, needs and obligations, the participants felt fulfilled and attained salvation. Similarly, both these elements were identified by the RAs as part of the ‘self-actualisation’ benefit. By upholding their religious duties, the participants attained this benefit and developed a feeling of self-accomplishment. A pilgrimage is a means to attain a sense of accomplishment (Hall et al. 2018), existential spiritual fulfilment (Digance 2003; Shuo et al. 2009; Collins-Kreiner 2010; Bond et al. 2015; Kim and Kim 2018) or salvation (Swatos and Tomasi 2002; Terzidou et al. 2017).

Overall, the quantitative results revealed the specific core religious benefits the participants gained during their participation in the Festival and are summarised in Table 5.40. Whilst the RAs identified broader benefits and additional elements as outcomes that are sought by the participants for the Festival, the residents, who participated in the Festival, complemented the RAs findings and views by shedding light into specific personal feelings gained that benefited them through their involvement in the Festival. These personal feelings, as identified by the participants, are important elements of the Festival and have to be maintained during the Festival. This is because, if the personal feelings of the participants are negatively affected, this would have serious repercussions on the Hindu belief systems and the way the participant perceives the Festival.

8.2.3 The actual Festival product

8.2.3.1 A brief introduction of the four components of the Festival

This sub-section focuses on the second layer of the three levels of religious experiences model for the Festival, the *actual Festival product*, which consists of the four components: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja, as depicted in Figure 2.3. It is within this layer that a broad spectrum of religious experiences is featured and manifested during the Festival. In other words, a bundle of traditional religious activities, customs and rites are performed by the local Hindu participants in each of the four components of the *actual Festival product*, whereby the participants gain a range of experiences and associated benefits, both religious and non-religious. In order to understand how these religious and non-religious benefits are embodied within the Festival, this sub-section evaluates the *actual Festival product* from two perspectives. First, it examines the proportion of participants who participated in each of the activities and second, it explores the importance they attached to the activities contributing to their religious experiences, in each of the four components of the Festival (see Section 5.3). Prior to addressing these two objectives, Shackley’s (2001) four stages model is evaluated (see Section 2.3.3.4).

8.2.3.2 *An evaluation of Shackley's model*

This Thesis has applied and recast Shackley's (2001) model to understand the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival for the participants within the *actual Festival product*. The model has been re-adapted to show a chronological passage of time and devotional practices starting from the preparation for the Festival to the Char Pahar ki Pooja. To fit the current context and content of the religious experience offerings of the Festival within the four stages model, this research differed from Shackley (2001) in the following aspects:

1. 'The return' stage in Shackley's (2001) model includes both the 'travel from the site' and 'the evaluation of the trip'. This differed for the research for this Thesis as the 'travel from the site' was embodied in the second component of 'the journey to and from Ganga Talao'. As for the evaluation of the Festival, it was not possible to consider this as part of the journey as there were other components of the Festival that followed.
2. The fourth component relates to the 'Char Pahar ki Pooja' in which the sacred water collected at the sacred site is used to undertake special prayers (see Section 1.2.3.2.4). This is an additional component that has been included in the study. It is only after this component that the participants' overall perceived religious experiences were evaluated.

It has been a common practice to explore the notion of pilgrimage (van Gennep 1960; Jones 2000; Warfield 2012; Singh 2013) and the understanding of tourism/visitor experience (Clawson and Knetsch 1966; Li 2000; Aho 2001; Borrie and Roggenbuck 2001; Graburn 2001; Lane 2007; Cutler and Carmichael 2010; Prebensen et al. 2012; Anantamongkolkul et al. 2017; Taylor et al. 2017) using multi-phase models. According to Scott and Le (2017), the use of multi-phase models provides a logical perspective on the discussion of experience within the tourism and leisure studies. Also, such models tend to understand a trip, first as a whole by dividing it into temporal and chronological phases (pre-trip, during the trip and post-trip) and second by focusing on a more specific activity or hedonic event (Scott and Le 2017). Whilst the first approach focuses on different phases involved, during a journey from home and back and to understand the total tourist/visitor experiences, the second approach looks at their experiences and outcomes at the site, thus ignoring the pre or post experiences. However, the experience of an individual goes beyond the on-site experience (Killion 1992), starting prior to his/her visit and continuing through his/her return from the sacred site (Shackley 2001).

The literature indicates that the study of experience, be it religious or non-religious, related to a trip includes a pre-travel experience, en-route experience, on-site experience and the post-evaluation of the experience. Based on this foundation, this research used the re-adapted model of Shackley

(2001) to study the religious experience offerings in each of the four components of the *actual Festival product* as the ‘generic’ model, as proposed by Shackley (2001), lacked depth. Building on her model, this research paid particular attention to the activities and rites the participants performed, and the level of importance attached to the activities and rites in contributing to their religious experiences, in each component of the Festival. As a result, the research has shed light on the patterns of the participants’ behaviours and the importance of those behaviours.

Irrespective of the various models used by scholars (Aho 2001; Lane 2007; Jager and Sanche 2010), Taylor et al. (2017) state that all these models cover similar types of phases which may include planning and undertaking research, travelling to the site, visiting the site, returning home from the site and evaluating the ‘overall’ journey. This was partly true in this Thesis as a participant leaves his/her usual home environment and travel back after experiencing the sacred site. However, this research modifies the traditional linear model of pre-experience, on-site experience and evaluating the experience once the participant returns to his/her usual home settings. The Char Pahar ki Pooja component is added to this model as participants take part in these prayers after their return from Ganga Talao. It is only after completing this aforementioned component that the participants reflect on or evaluate their overall religious experiences, as depicted in Figure 8.3.

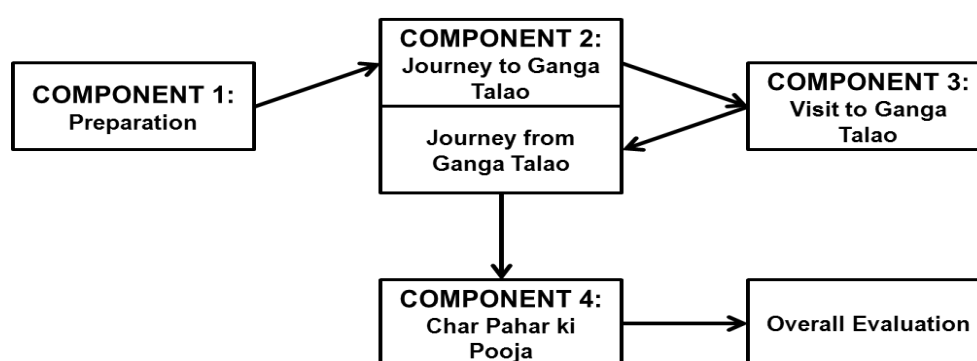


Figure 8.3: A model of the religious experience offerings for the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri

Source: (Author 2018)

All the components in the model were given equal importance as the religious experience offering of the Festival is more than the religious experiences consumed in a single component. This holistic model fully captures the ‘entire’ religious experience offerings of the Festival for the participants in a sequential manner within the four components without omitting the overall evaluation of the participant’s journey. Whilst Component 1 is based on the ‘usual’ home environment, Components 2 to 4 take place away from the home settings.

The deep involvement and intense concentration of a participant in the activities or rites he/she performed in each of the components of the *actual Festival product* evokes flow experience. The flow experience is an exciting and extraordinary experience that is encountered away from his/her

usual home settings (see Section 2.3). The perceived religious experiences offered by the Festival for a participant is existential and multifaceted.

8.2.3.3 The proportion of participants who participated in each religious activity for the Festival

Like all events and festivals, the religious and pilgrimage festival of Maha Shivaratri is perishable; it has a timescale with a start and an end date. The participants have to decide, plan and organise for this celebration to pay reverence to Lord Shiva; it is carried out in the four components of the *actual Festival product*. Participants undertake religious activities prior to and during the Festival in order to fulfil their religious obligations and duties. The activities carried out by the participants in each of the four components of the Festival are a means to demonstrate their Hindu belief systems, traditions and level of commitment that help in shaping their behaviours as well as their experiences and associated benefits. For the Festival, the participants carried out different activities in view of gaining different religious benefits. The participants were given a list of activities in each components of the *actual Festival product* that measured the activities they performed using a nominal scale of ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ (see Section 5.3). Using the responses, this section explores the overall participation of the participants in religious activities, as part of the *actual Festival product*. More specifically, it examines the proportion of participants who participated in the ‘common’ religious activities they carried out in all four components and the activities that were ‘contextual’ to the components of the Festival (see Sections 5.3.2.1, 5.3.3.1, 5.3.4.1, 5.3.5.1).

8.2.3.3.1 The proportion of participants who participated in the ‘common’ religious activities

Five religious activities were identified as ‘common’ practices - fasting, making a donation, wearing white clothes and listening to and singing religious songs - as they were undertaken in each of the four components of the Festival. Figure 8.4 illustrates the proportion of participants who participated in the five ‘common’ religious practices in the *actual Festival product*.

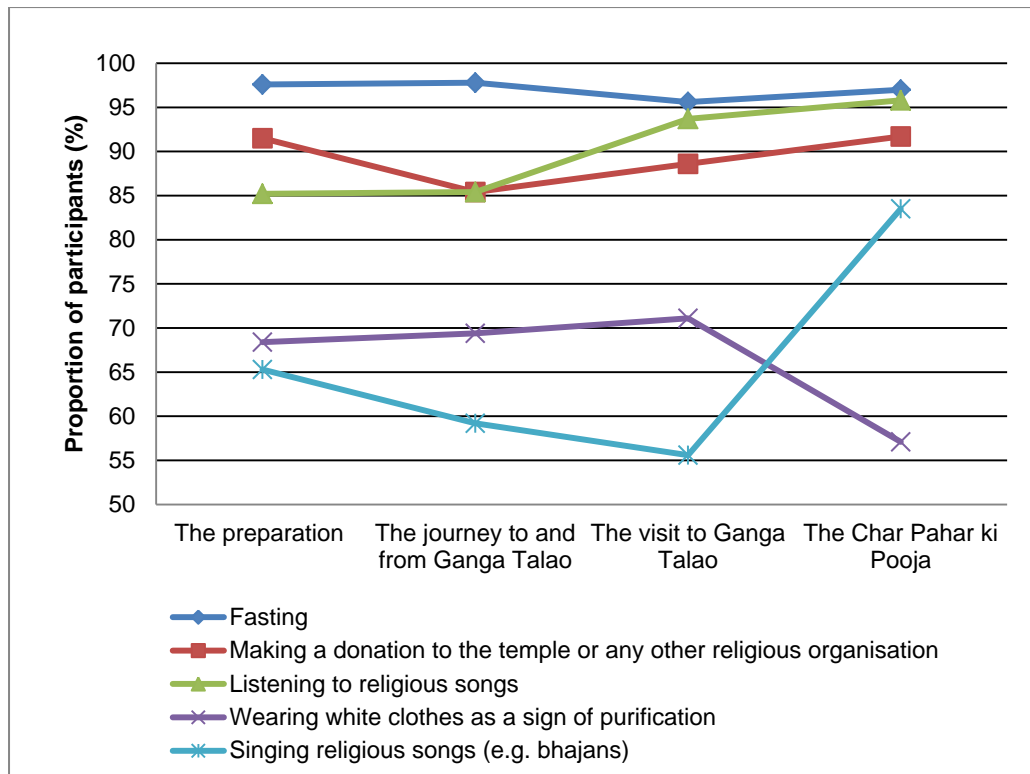


Figure 8.4: The proportion of participants who participated in the ‘common’ activities for the Festival
Source: (Author 2018)

Figure 8.4 shows that among the five activities, fasting was the activity most commonly practised by the participants. The linear line for this activity not only shows that it was the most performed compared to the rest but also indicates that participants consistently observed fasts in each of the four components throughout the Festival. This aligns with the literature in that fasting is seen as a common practice in the Hindu religion before and during a festival, helping an individual to remain in the purest possible state (Davidson and Gitlitz 2002) and gaining ‘self-purification’ benefits as discussed in Section 8.2.2.2 and 8.2.2.3. Chi-square tests conducted for fasting, in each of the four components of the Festival, revealed that there was a significant difference by gender and the level of participation of this activity during the participants’ visit to Ganga Talao with females more likely to undertake fasting ($\phi = 0.12$ showing a weak effect size) during their visit at Ganga Talao than the males. Fasting in the Hindu traditions is an activity which is more likely to be undertaken by women than men (Flueckiger 2015). As such, the literature supports the finding of this Thesis.

For the remaining four ‘common’ activities, the proportion of participants who participated in the each of these activities varied throughout the four components; this is shown through the fluctuation in the line. For instance, as the Festival progressed, more participants were listening to religious songs; this is perhaps because as the Festival progressed more music was being played, which tended to increase the religious mood and fervour of the Festival. In contrast, the number of participants singing religious songs decreased during the first three components but increased

considerably in the Char Pahar ki Pooja. This could be because participants listened to religious songs more frequently during these three components and therefore sang less. As for the last component, the Char Pahar ki Pooja, the higher percentage of those singing can be attributed to the fact that there was a significant decrease in the number of participants, with only 266 out of 412, participating in the Char Pahar ki Pooja (see Section 5.2.3.4.1), and so, a high percentage of a lower number of participants yielded high proportion of participants singing during the Char Pahar ki Pooja. This reflects the fact that during this four-tier prayer, participants are deeply involved in singing through the reciting of mantras while worshipping Lord Shiva throughout the whole night. Thus, both singing and listening to religious songs have inner existential benefits to the participants and can help to reinforce their disposition, identity and belief. The findings of the study conform to the literature in that a pilgrimage is regarded as a journey allowing one to express one's ideals, values and identities (Liutikas 2012, 2014, 2015). Thus, the belief system is a fundamental aspect in our life as it shapes the choices we make and influence our behaviour as well as our religious practices. In turn, the religious practices undertaken by adherents help them to become one with Lord Shiva and these influence their religious experiences and benefits gained for the Festival.

8.2.3.3.2 *The proportion of participants who participated in the 'contextual' religious activities*

Apart from the five 'common' religious activities that appeared in the *actual Festival product*, participants also conducted activities that were contextual to each component of the Festival and that took place in a different environment/setting. These contextual religious activities give rise to subjective and social experiences within specific physical environments where participants seek to meet their contextual desired needs and goals. Omitting the five 'common' religious activities, Table 8.1 shows the two 'contextual' activities with the highest proportion of participants participating in each of the four components of the Festival.

Table 8.1: The two contextual activities undertaken by the highest proportion of participants in the *actual Festival product*

<i>Actual Festival product</i>	<i>Activities</i>	Overall percentage of those who participated in each activity (%)
<i>The preparation</i>	Buy religious (Pooja) items for prayers	98.8
	Clean your house and yard thoroughly	89.8
<i>The journey to and from Ganga Talao</i>	Carry religious (Pooja) items	95.9
	Call out God's name (e.g. Bham Bham Bholey, Om Namah Shivaya)	82.3
<i>The visit to Ganga Talao</i>	Collect the sacred water from the lake	98.8
	Make an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) at the lake	98.8
<i>The Char Pahar ki Pooja</i>	Pour the sacred water on the Shivling	99.2
	Offer Bel Patra to Lord Shiva temple	96.6

Except for the statement 'clean your house and yard thoroughly', all the religious activities in Table 8.1 relate to undertaking specific rituals for the Festival. The highest proportion of participants participated in purchasing and carrying of religious items and making offerings (e.g. sacred water,

Bel Patra, fruits, etc.) to Lord Shiva in the *actual Festival product*. In performing these religious activities, the participants were able to show their devotion and to experience their Hindu belief systems. The highest percentage of participants undertook these activities as they believed it helped them to please the God, receive His blessings and experience closeness to Him. Likewise, the act of hailing Lord Shiva during their journey also made them feel connected to Him. All these activities carried out by participants align with Smart's (1996, 1998) practical and ritual dimension (see Section 2.2.2.1), and these allow the participants to affirm their identities and preserve their traditional customs and rites. From the literature, rituals enable participants to reaffirm their identities, to bond with their family, friends and celebrants and to celebrate and preserve long existing cultural and religious traditions (Whaling 2009; Singh 2013, 2015; Flueckiger 2015). Participants were also involved in the cleaning of their house and yard during the preparation component. This activity enabled the house environment to be purified. Purification was not just about the 'self' by fasting or abstaining from certain food, but also about keeping one's surrounding/environment clean that triggers transformational experiences and allows one to connect with the God. Writing on the Mauritian Diwali festival (the Festival of Light), Ramkissoon (2015) pointed out that the activities of the Mauritians of the Hindu faith included cleaning their house prior to decorating it, avoiding consuming meat, buying new clothes, amongst other activities. Though the author did not provide much explanation as to why these activities are performed, it is believed that the local Hindus tend to follow similar practices and behaviours generally during other religious and cultural festivals. Nevertheless, the cleaning of the house remains a very common activity for the participants in order to ensure their home environment is spiritually clean and to connect with the deity. Simply put, cleanliness could rhetorically be seen as a sign of godliness/piety.

For the prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja, the RAs (see discussion in Section 8.2.2.2) considered that participation was paramount. However, the results given in Table 5.10 indicate that approximately one third (146 of 412) of the participants did not attend this prayer, which makes up the fourth component of the Festival. This shows a disparity in the views of the two stakeholders in respect of the participation in the Char Pahar ki Pooja. For those participating in the Char Pahar ki Pooja, the prayers tend to bring about an existential sense of completeness, a higher purpose and a deeper meaning of spiritual life leading to the finding of one's inner self and self-purification and self-transformation (see Section 8.2.2.2). What it means for those not attending these prayers is simply that they missed the opportunity to gain the 'total' religious experiences and benefits offered by the Festival.

A Chi-square test was conducted for all the 'contextual' activities as carried out by male and female participants. For all these activities, the null hypothesis was not rejected, meaning that there was no statistically significant difference by gender in respect of the participation in these activities. Therefore, the male and female participants were equally likely to undertake these activities during the Festival.

8.2.3.4 *The proportion of participants participating in activities and the level of importance of these activities to the religious experiences of participants*

This sub-section explores whether there is a link between the proportion of participants who participated in the activities and the importance they attached to these activities in contributing to their religious experiences (see Sections 5.3.2.3, 5.3.3.3, 5.3.4.3 and 5.3.5.3). The level of importance of the contribution of each of the activities to the religious experiences was measured through a four-point Likert item rating scale with the options ‘1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Less Important, 4=Not Important’. Table 8.2 shows the activities which the participants’ denoted, by an overall median value of 1.00 in the *actual Festival product*, was very important to their religious experiences.

Table 8.2: The statements with an overall median value of 1.00 in the *actual Festival product*

<i>Actual Festival product</i>	<i>Activities</i>
<i>The preparation</i>	Buying religious (Pooja) items. Following established religious behaviours. Maintaining your house and yard clean.
<i>The journey to and from Ganga Talao</i>	Following established religious behaviours. Experiencing the sacred atmosphere.
<i>The visit to Ganga Talao</i>	Making an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) at the lakeside. Collecting the sacred water from Ganga Talao. Following established religious behaviours. The sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, incense sticks burning). The sacred environment (e.g. the temples, the sacred water, cool temperature) at Ganga Talao.
<i>The Char Pahar ki Pooja</i>	Pouring the sacred water on the Shivling. Following established religious behaviours. Actively participating in the Char Pahar Ki Pooja (e.g. making offerings to the Shivling). Being involved in the holy bath of the Shivling. The sacred atmosphere (bell ringing, incense sticks burning).

Throughout the four components of the Festival, participants consistently made clear that it was very important to their religious experiences to follow established religious behaviours, for example fasting, praying or carrying out rituals and other contextual religious activities, such as buying religious items during the preparation component, making offerings and collecting the sacred water as part of their visit to the sacred lake and the pouring of the sacred water and making offerings to the Shivling by actively involving in the Char Pahar ki Pooja. The Mann-Whitney U test, comparing the responses by gender, showed that the null hypothesis was rejected for the fifteen activities which were very important to the participants’ religious experiences. There was no statistically significant difference by gender for these activities and therefore both males and females were likely to give equal importance to these activities in contributing to their religious experiences throughout the Festival.

The fact that rituals, prayers and offerings are essential parts of the Hindu religion explains why it was very important to the religious experiences of the Hindu adherents. The literature supports the finding that worship, including the making of offering to God(s) (Smith 2016), is an integral part of the practical and ritual dimension of the Hindu religion (Smart 1996, 1998). The participants showed consistent responses in that the activities which were carried out by the highest proportion of participants during the preparation, the visit to the site and the Char Pahar ki Pooja (in terms of buying of religious items, keeping their house and yard clean, collecting and pouring the sacred water and making offerings), see Table 8.1, were also very important activities contributing to their religious experiences within these components (see Table 8.2). As for the journey to and from Ganga Talao component, the participants indicated that the highest proportion of participants undertook the activities ‘carry religious (Pooja) items’ and ‘call out God’s name’ (see Table 8.1), but they only related that these contextual religious activities were important to their religious experiences. What was very important to their religious experiences, in all but the preparation component, was the experience of the sacred atmosphere or environment. This shows that the participants attributed the highest level of importance to the sacred physical environment in influencing their religious experiences. This result conforms to the literature as highlighted in Sections 2.3.3.1, 2.3.3.2 and 2.3.3.4.1. In essence, the atmosphere evokes psychological benefits (López et al. 2017; He et al. 2018) which are essential in connecting an individual with his/her religion and gaining religious experiences (Rodrigues and McIntosh 2014; Kim and Kim 2018) thereby strengthening his/her faith (Irimias et al. 2016). In general, the proportion of participants undertaking ‘common’ and ‘contextual’ religious activities as part of the *actual Festival product* (see Sections 8.2.3.3.1 and 8.2.3.3.2) were also considered to be very important or important to their religious experiences. The sacred atmosphere in the three components of the Festival, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja, was a fundamental factor in contributing to the participants’ religious experiences and should therefore be maintained and preserved during the Festival as it helps them comply with their existential religious obligations and duties pertaining to the Hindu belief systems.

In general, the participants’ perceived religious experiences to vary in the types of activities and rites they carried out during the Festival to fulfil and satisfy their religious, psychological, emotional and social needs. This means that, if two participants undertake the same religious activities within the same environment, their religious experiences may differ according to the importance they attach to the activities occurring within the particular physical setting. Despite this difference in the participants’ religious experiences, a change in the *actual Festival product* may have implications on the participants’ level of satisfaction, future behaviour intentions and attachment to the Festival and site.

8.2.4 The augmented nature of the religious experiences

8.2.4.1 *An introduction*

This sub-section discusses the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* offered through participation in the Festival (see Section 4.4). From Sections 2.6.5 and 4.4.1, the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* relates to what heightens the ‘normal’ or ‘mundane’ experiences of the local Hindu participants during the Festival. These add value to the core religious experiences and benefits which make the Festival experiences distinct from other local Hindu religious festivals and religious activities. From the RAs perspectives, the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* is embodied within the (1) religious, (2) physical and (3) social settings. All three settings are essential in augmenting the religious experience offerings for the Festival. As the above sections have predominantly discussed the religious activities contributing to the core religious experiences and benefits of the participants, this sub-section focuses on the physical and social settings within two components, in particular the journey to and from Ganga Talao and the visit at Ganga Talao. This is because the experiences take place away from their mundane lives, which means away from their home settings. Also, the overall findings of the RAs indicate the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* offered by the Festival for the participants is mostly due to these two components.

8.2.4.2 *The physical settings augmenting the religious experiences*

The physical settings, as they emerged from the analyses of the interviews of the RAs, are composed of festival settings, atmosphere and place dependence and attachment which act as a catalyst in augmenting the religious experiences for the participants. In this research, the influence of the physical settings was shown to enable the participants to focus on their religious/spirit quest thereby enhancing the quality of their religious experiences.

8.2.4.2.1 *The festival settings*

The constituent ‘festival settings’ relates to a range of temporary and permanent facilities and services that were provided and made available to the participants at Ganga Talao and along the way to and from the sacred site (see Section 4.4.3.1). These amenities included physical facilities, for instance better infrastructure (road enlargements, improved roads to and from the site and parking), more tents (for resting and providing en-route services) and toilets, and intangible services like an increasing number of policemen across the island to manage the traffic and ensure safety of the participants. These were provided, managed and delivered by the festival organisers to ensure that participants gained peace of mind and remained focused on their religious goals. For the RAs, these are fundamental amenities pertaining to the physical environment that benefitted the

participants by helping them to carry out their religious fulfilment with less trouble. The interaction of the participants with the facilities and services enhanced the perceived quality of their religious experiences and led to overall positive evaluations of their religious experiences. The tourism literature supports this finding in that the settings in which certain activities are undertaken can lead to satisfactory experiences (McCool 2006) and can give rise to a positive evaluation of the experience (Cutler and Carmichael 2010). However, some scholars are of the view that the increase in facilities, for example during the Hajj pilgrimage, leads to the commoditisation of the sacred experience and the secularisation of the sacred space, thus resulting in a loss of its meaning (Siddiqui 1986; Delaney 1990; Timothy and Olsen 2006). The findings of this Thesis differed as it emerged from the analyses of the RAs' interviews that their perception was that the amenities helped to enhance the bond between the participants with their physical settings, and that the festival settings had a positive bearing on the participants' perceived augmented religious experiences, thus allowing them to focus and meet their desired religious goals and needs to gain self-actualisation experiences and benefits.

8.2.4.2.2 The atmosphere

The constituent 'atmosphere' was identified by both the RAs and the local Hindu participants in contributing to the *augmented nature of the religious experiences*. Whilst the qualitative research conducted with the RAs provided comprehensive insights into what the atmosphere consists of, the quantitative approach with the local Hindu participants provided the level of importance they attached to experiencing the sacred atmosphere. For the RAs, the atmosphere consisted of three elements - soundscape, ambiance and climate – within the physical intangible environment (see Section 4.4.3.2). First, while the soundscape at Ganga Talao included sounds from the bells, songs, chanting of mantras, kirtans and bhajans and the 'conch', the soundscape during the journey to and from Ganga Talao related to the sounds not only from instruments and music played but also from clapping, singing, dancing and praising of Lord Shiva. Second, the ambiance was another element contributing to the augmentation of the religious experiences for the participants during the Festival. Ambiance, which in the current context can only be experienced for the period of the Festival, refers to the mood, character and quality of the environment as a result of a large number of participants encountered along the pilgrimage route and at the site. It is the beautiful ambiance and the spiritual atmosphere outside of the temples that makes the beauty of this Festival, as noted by Tiwari (2017). The ambiance included not only the soundscape but also the wearing of the same type of clothes by participants who walk with Kanwars and the en-route services provided by many volunteers to the participants. Third, climate was also deemed to play an essential part in augmenting the participants' religious experiences, as it was what the participants expected during the time of the Festival. All the three elements of the atmosphere, according to the RAs, were capable of engaging the pilgrims' senses.

The RAs considered that by immersing themselves in these three elements of the atmosphere, participants experienced heightened emotions away from their usual environment that affected their behaviours for the Festival. For instance, both soundscape and ambiance made the participants feel closer to Lord Shiva and gain self-transformational experiences. Both these feelings helped them to be renewed spiritually and to experience self-renewal (see Figure 8.2). In addition, participants were able to experience and express their identity (both religious and social) and this allowed them to reconnect to, and immerse in, their Hindu belief systems. In regard to religious tourism destinations, Tang and Fang (2007) noted that when tourists are in such places, and they experience the unique soundscape, they feel spiritually renewed. The findings of this study support this proposal but also contribute to the literature in that soundscape can also trigger self-transformational experiences and benefits. The study is also in accordance with Liu et al. (2013) in that soundscape consists of the listener, the sound and the environment that can potentially affect the tourists' perceptions and experiences of the place visited (He et al. 2018). Therefore, the nature of the ambiance and soundscape affects one's behaviour, ability to connect to the Supreme Being and loyalty and attachment to the deity and the Festival. In essence, both soundscape and ambiance within an environment trigger psychological benefits and can deepen an individual's religious experiences. Ambiance in the literature, in the context of restaurants research, has also shown that there is a strong link between ambiance and settings and that ambiance can influence the perception of a customer in a restaurant as well as his/her behaviours (Kim et al. 2006; Dutta et al. 2013). Customer evaluations were seen to depend on ambient factors, for instance sound, lighting, smell, temperature, ambiance and layout, amongst others (Baker and Cameron 1996; Bone and Ellen 1999; Wall and Berry 2007; Ryu and Jang 2008). In addition, it was found that the ambiance of restaurants helps to target more customers and improve their loyalty (Bitner 1990; Wall and Berry 2007; Ha and Jang 2010).

The results of this study of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri add to the literature by identifying that ambiance, in the context of religious and pilgrimage festivals, can affect the participants' behaviours, loyalty to, and attachment with the festival as well as their identity. While both the elements soundscape and ambiance are managed and controlled by the RAs, with some control by the participants along their journey to and from the sacred site, no such control can be exerted by the stakeholders on the climate. The climate is naturally cool with intermittent rain at Ganga Talao, as it is the highest natural lake of Mauritius and located on a 20 acres natural park, as outlined in *Chapter 1*. From the literature, it is known that both weather and climate can influence visitors' visit to the religious site (Nyaupane et al. 2015). This research furthers this view by indicating that both the natural environment of the site and the weather conditions have transformational benefits on the participants and these help them to experience its sacredness. As such, all three elements of atmosphere - soundscape, ambiance and climate - elevated the participants' emotions, attracted them and augmented their religious experiences.

The results of the quantitative survey showed that participants were likely to find that ‘experiencing the sacred atmosphere’ during their journey to and from Ganga Talao, and ‘the sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, incense sticks burning)’ and ‘the sacred environment (e.g. the temples, the sacred water, cool temperature)’ at Ganga Talao were very important to their religious experience (see Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4). These results were already discussed in Section 8.2.3.4. In terms of singing, which also forms part of atmosphere, 59.2% of participants sang religious songs (e.g. bhajans) during their journey, with 55.6% of attendees carrying out this activity at the site (see Sections 5.3.3.1 and 5.3.4.1). Even though a small number of participants undertook singing in both these components, they ranked it as ‘Important’, as shown by the overall median value of 2.00 (see Sections 5.3.3.3 and 5.3.4.3). The finding indicated that even though the participants were not highly involved in singing, they were able to experience the sacred atmosphere through their senses, for instance hearing and sight. The divine and spiritual atmosphere was felt and lived throughout the pilgrimage route and the site as the participants played devotional songs while pulling their Kanwars or at many resting sites where religious songs were played in the background. The results from the quantitative approach also showed that 40 (16.3%) out of 245 of the participants, who used a means of transport to travel to and from Ganga Talao, or in part, indicated that ‘experiencing the atmosphere along the pilgrimage route’ was the most important contribution that walking would have made to their religious experiences that they missed out on by not undertaking the walk (see Sections 5.3.3.5). This result indicates that those who were not able to walk recognised the spiritual atmosphere that prevails along the pilgrimage route.

A Mann-Whitney U test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference by gender in relation to these activities: the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that both genders were likely to attribute the same level of importance to these activities. This finding concurs with the research of Shuo et al. (2009) on a research on pilgrimage places in that there was no statistically significant difference between genders in terms of experiencing a holy atmosphere.

8.2.4.2.3 Place dependence and attachment

In regard to place dependence and attachment, the RAs considered that the sacred artefacts and the sacred water were fundamental aspects of Ganga Talao, without which the participants would not fulfil their religious duties and activities of collecting the holy water and conducting their prayers (see Section 4.4.3.3). While the sacred water is the natural water from the lake, the sacred artefacts, including the temples and the huge statues at the entry of Ganga Talao, are man-made objects at the site. Both were considered ‘aesthetic’ features of Ganga Talao, from which participants were able to derive meanings, fulfil their religious obligations and be ‘materially’ bonded aesthetically. According to the RAs, these evoke extraordinary experiences that augmented the religious experiences of the participants. As a result, the participants developed deep emotional connections to the sacred artefacts and the sacred water, thereby leading to their attachment to Ganga Talao. The site offered participants the opportunity to reach their religious goals of worshipping, collecting the

sacred water, amongst other goals which help them to reinforce their disposition, identity, faith and belief.

The findings of this study are in accordance with the literature in that religion allows an individual to learn about his/her identity and true self and it *“can have a profound influence on people’s relations to place, and on place itself through...sacred structures”* (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004, p.386). It also allows him/her to perform rituals and other activities such as interacting with devotees, priests, artefacts and objects (Mead 1934; Rochberg-Halton 1984), resulting in the attachment to the place enabling him/her to accomplish his/her goals (Kyle et al. 2004). The physical characteristics of the site support the individuals by providing amenities or resources (Stokols and Shumaker 1981). In the same vein, the RAs considered that Ganga Talao provides the participants with the opportunity to perform a number of activities at the site to facilitate their goal attainment. Over the years, the site not only holds the same symbolic meaning as that of the Ganges River (Tiwari 2017) but also creates a sense of belonging to one’s ancestors and one’s tradition and culture. For the Hindus in Mauritius, Ganga Talao has turned into a religious and spiritual landmark for the community and is part of their identity building. In the present context, the sacred artefacts were considered by the RAs to be the pull factor at Ganga Talao and the sacred water was found to be significantly important, especially because participants use it, individually and/or collectively, for prayers at Ganga Talao and during the Char Pahar ki Pooja. As such, both the sacred artefacts and the sacred water were seen as aspects which attach the participants to the sacred place, as well as augmenting the participants’ religious experiences at the sacred site during the Festival.

8.2.4.3 The social settings augmenting the religious experiences

Using the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the local Hindu participants, this sub-section considers the social nature of the Festival in augmenting the religious experiences of the participants. In fact, the Festival and its social settings play an imperative and salient role in the lives of the participants. In general, the social settings are reliant on several factors, for instance travel companions (Dorwart et al. 2009), other visitors (Chang and Horng 2010), the number of people visiting the site (Swarbrooke 2002) and the service providers (Roberts and Hall 2001; Chang and Horng 2010), such as public bodies and profit and non-profit organisations (Taylor et al. 2017) that can influence and enhance the social experiences and benefits of the festival attendees. The following sub-section commences with a discussion on the four constituents, ‘dynamic and active participation’, ‘social learning’, ‘social flow’ and ‘facilitators of social engagement’, emerged from the analyses of the RAs’ qualitative interviews (see Section 4.4.4) followed by an examination of the quantitative results with the local Hindu participants on the overall evaluation of their personal ‘social’ opportunities (see Section 5.4.4).

8.2.4.3.1 The perceived social experiences offered by the Festival from the perspectives of the Mauritian Religious Authorities

8.2.4.3.1.1 Dynamic and active participation

The constituent ‘dynamic and active participation’ refers to the large number of participants taking part in the Festival (see Section 4.4.4.1). The RAs considered that participation by walking in considerable numbers was an opportunity for the local Hindu community to demonstrate their loyalty, religious commitment and belief, and to perpetuate their culture and traditions through practicing their religion. Irrespective of the mode of travel to and from Ganga Talao, disciples experienced the ‘crowd’ or the ‘mass’ which consisted of like-minded individuals sharing ‘common’ religious values, goals and interests. In the literature, there is a plethora of studies on mass gatherings at sacred and pilgrimage sites pertaining to the Hindu religion in India (Shinde 2007; Timothy 2011; Jacobsen 2013; Singh 2013; Buzinde et al. 2014; Hopkins et al. 2015). However, the effect of the mass participation of the local Hindu participants in the local context remains unexplored and it is something that does not go unnoticed in Mauritius. A rough approximation of the number of participants has been outlined in Section 1.2.3. By leaving their homes, together with others, participants move away from their everyday crises and routine life. This gives rise to notions of liminality and *communitas* (Turner 1973, 1982). In the present context, the RAs considered that the participants converged on the sacred site, which can be described as the ‘crowd puller’, to fetch the sacred water, to worship, and to perform a number of devotional/religious practices so as to accomplish their desired religious obligations and duties. This mass participation alongside others, to practice one’s religion, elicits an intense social augmentation of one’s emotion and belief. A similar view was shared in the article by Ruback et al. (2008) in that during the yearly Magh Mela festival in India, millions of Hindu pilgrims travelled to the confluence of the two rivers, Ganges and Yamuna, to undertake rituals and to observe other pilgrims performing their rituals that socially strengthened the beliefs of these participants. During such gatherings, as noted by the RAs, a sense of ‘community oneness’ or a sense of togetherness prevail, both along the pilgrimage route and at Ganga Talao. Also, at the communal destination of Ganga Talao, the participants experience shared attachment to the site. Therefore, the Festival is a means for hundreds of thousands of local Hindus participants to be involved, allowing them to establish connection to their Hindu belief systems, to practice their religion and to bond with Ganga Talao. Through their involvement, they are immersed in devotional/religious activities and they jointly experience escapism from their day-to-day routines to re-affirm their identity. Similar views on identity were shared by Singh and Haigh (2015) in that Hindus seek to affirm their identity during a pilgrimage. Also, the formation of identity during a festival, pilgrimage and at sacred sites was covered in Sections 2.2.3, 2.2.4.2 and 2.2.5.1.

Another important finding of this research is that the Festival is not restricted to the participation of local Hindus only. It supports the participation of Mauritian non-Hindus and Hindus from other

parts of the world, and this adds to its social dynamics. On the one hand, the Festival offered the local participants and foreign Hindus the opportunity to reinforce their (religious and social) identities and on the other hand, it helps towards the building of a shared social and community identity between the Mauritian Hindu and non-Hindu participants, thus revivifying social relations, bolstering rapport and uniting diverse religious groups that foster and promote tolerance and social integration. Such feelings can only arise during the period of the Festival where the mass participation of a variety of participants triggers positive and heightened existential emotions. This line of thought aligns with the literature in that the travellers reinforced their bonds with their companionship and/or built rapport with others, including the local people, thus creating memorable experiences associated with their positive emotions (Chandralal and Valenzuela 2015). As such, the ‘dynamic and active participation’ of a variety of participants and the encouragement of pleasant social interactions can enhance the participants’ positive emotions and religious social experiences, which could not have been experienced through the normal everyday religious practices and gatherings; this contributes to the augmentation of the participants’ religious experiences.

8.2.4.3.1.2 *Social learning*

Within the social settings of the Festival, ‘social learning’ emerged as one of the four constituents augmenting the participants’ religious experiences (see Section 4.4.4.2). Through social learning, participants furthered their skills and understanding when partaking in communal activities. Social learning was achieved when children and youngsters were taught by and observed their elders during the Festival. Also, during the Festival along the pilgrimage route, participants were provided with prayer booklets giving them the opportunity to read and learn prayers which they would then sing alongside others. Both adults and children have the opportunity to feel enriched by gaining knowledge and achieving personal growth for the Festival. For instance, along the pilgrimage route, parents were able to transpose religious and social values, identity, principles, etiquettes and dogmas to the youngsters. This finding aligns with the literature in that an individual learns and expands his/her knowledge during a festival (Lee et al. 2012), learns about his/her traditional and cultural roots and identity (Reader 2007) and gains spiritual knowledge at a sacred site (Buzinde et al. 2014). The process of teaching and learning is called religious socialisation (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004) which involves the passing on of key information to maintain social advancement (Davis and Mcleod 2003). That said, a participant learns not only about his/her self but also about social structure and identity in the fulfilment of his/her social-religious duties. This is an important feature in most religions, including Hinduism. More so, in the Hindu religion such social needs could be related to social dharma which Singh and Haigh (2015, p.793) refer to “*dharma of duties and the rites prescribed by community and culture*”. By immersing and engaging in their religious practices and culture, the participants undergo transformational experiences as they learn new knowledge and values. As a result, the participants reinforce their Hindu belief systems and strengthen their connection with their traditions, religion and community. Also, they derive

meanings from what they learned and act accordingly. That is, they change their behaviours to follow group norms and disciplines in this mass gathering alongside others that triggers a sense of belonging and a perception of shared identity to achieve common social goals, thus eliciting intense pleasures. Such collective experiences heighten the participants' feelings (e.g. ecstatic, spirited, determined and blessed) among them and augment their religious experiences.

8.2.4.3.1.3 Social flow

The constituent 'social flow' was also considered to augment the participants' religious experiences (see Section 4.4.4.3). In this study, social flow relates to the resulting social experiences gained by the continuous interaction among members of the same group for the Festival. For those who prefer to walk to and/or from Ganga Talao, they often do so in groups composed of more than 2 people and they carry out things together and gain experiences collectively. For example, by undertaking communal sacrifice, the participants continuously interact among themselves and communicate with other members of the group. In the literature, it was found that the collective activities and experiences give the adherents social meaning-making (Ruback et al. 2008) and this can affect the overall evaluation of their trip (Cutler and Carmichael 2010). The greater the social attachments, the more likely it stimulates a more intense sense of belonging within the community (McClinchey and Carmichael 2010). The finding of this research on the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri concurs in that the participants developed social and interpersonal relationship among themselves as they walked together for the same religious goals or values, regardless of their social backgrounds. They not only experienced companionship and *communitas*, or a sense of togetherness, but also consolidated their ties with others, developed a sense of *camaraderie*, and experienced a greater sense of pride, unity and belonging as well as a sense of community, and this in turn elevated their overall religious feelings.

8.2.4.3.1.4 Facilitating participants' participation

Section 4.4.4.4 highlighted the views of the RAs on the constituent 'facilitating participants' participation'; it refers to those providing voluntary services along the pilgrimage route and at the sacred site to help participants during their trip. The volunteers were composed of organisations or individuals either of the Hindu or non-Hindus faith. Volunteerism was often perceived as an action of worship to God. For example, the RAs indicated that some volunteers erected tents along the pilgrimage route and at the site in order to provide a number of services. These tents are normally areas for resting and consuming some of the en-route services. Such temporary resting sites give rise to social interactions between group members or between the volunteers or the participants. Very often, religious hymns are played in these tents. Altogether, the resting sites bring together participants travelling for similar interests and purposes which foster social relationships and bonds. The study found that a positive social encounter between the volunteers and the participants within

the setting is likely to positively influence the level of satisfaction of the participants and their augmented religious experiences along the way to the site and at the site. This agrees with the literature in that the interaction between two parties was seen to engender co-creation experiences through discussions and interactions with organisations enabling the creation of unique or personalised experiences for themselves (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). These social interactions and the building of relationship in turn help in the development of memorable experiences for the visitors (Morgan 2006; Tung and Ritchie 2011a, 2011b). Therefore, by experiencing positive memorable experiences, a participant will be more prone to share his/her positive festival experience with others in the community and also increase the likelihood of attending the festival again in the future (Ruback et al. 2008; McClinchey and Carmichael 2010). This means that the services provided by the volunteers help in generating not only positive social relationships but also positive memories with others, thus augmenting the social religious experiences for the participants during the Festival.

8.2.4.3.2 The perceived social experiences of the local Hindu participants

The quantitative findings indicated that only a small portion 10.7% (44) indicated that the first main reason for attending the Festival was for social reasons, with males more likely to participate in the Festival for social reasons than females (see Section 5.2.2.3). These reasons included attending the Festival with family and/or friends, reaffirming their Hindu identity, experiencing a sense of togetherness and volunteering during the Festival. These findings align with the results of the RA interviews as discussed within the four broader themes that emerged. When the participants were asked with whom they went to Ganga Talao during their participation, 96.4% (397) of the participants indicated that they went in a group consisting family and/or friends or their partners (see Section 5.2.2.2), with the highest number of participants 58.3% (240) indicating that they preferred to go with family members only (see Section 5.2.2.2). This shows that participation in the Festival has a social connotation, demonstrated by the fact that they were more likely to participate with family and/or friends, although their main reason to participate in the Festival was not mainly for social reasons. Therefore, the Festival can be seen as a social event whereby family and friends are united for a common purpose to carry out their religious obligations and duties amongst themselves. The literature supports that people, who visit pilgrimage sites, also do so for other than religious motives, to include social drives (Shuo et al. 2009).

The results of the quantitative survey also showed that participants were likely to evaluate the personal 'social' opportunities generated by their participation in the Festival to be 'Important' or 'Very important' for the Festival, with the opportunity to 'be together with my family and/or friends' being 'Very important' (see Section 5.4.4). The findings of personal 'social' opportunities tally with the findings of the RAs in that the Festival allowed the participants to be free from their daily life, to move to the extraordinary, to meet other devotees, to express the Hindu identity and to share the experience of praying with others (see Section 8.2.4.3.1.2). Being with family members,

more specifically with parents, as indicated the RAs was an opportunity for social learning. This may be one of the reasons why the participants found that being with family and/or friends was a very important personal ‘social’ opportunity during the Festival. The literature supports that religious festivals involving a pilgrimage can foster social affirmation through social exploration and social interaction (Shuo et al. 2009). This religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri also concurs with literature in that the finding that bonding with family members, friends and celebrants, reaffirming identities and celebrating and preserving long existing cultural and religious traditions can occur during rituals (Whaling 2009; Singh 2013, 2015; Flueckiger 2015). From the quantitative research, the respondents also indicated that ‘interacting with the priests (Pandits)’ was an important personal ‘social’ opportunity, with male participants being more likely to agree with this statement than female participants ($p = 0.038$ a weak effect size $r = 0.11$). Although social interactions with the priests did not emerge from the interviews with the RAs, the literature supports that interacting with the priests, for example to take *darshana*, at the sacred space, is a means for participants to achieve spiritual knowledge (Buzinde et al. 2014). Lastly, the participants found that sharing an equal status with other devotees was also an important personal ‘social’ opportunity, with male participants being more likely to agree with this statement than female participants ($p = 0.03$ a weak effect size $r = 0.11$). This relates to the notion of liminality, as previously discussed in literature (see Section 2.2.4.1).

8.3 THE PERCEIVED AUTHENTIC NATURE OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF COMMODITISATION

8.3.1 Background

This sub-section has two parts. It uses the views of the three sets of stakeholders, the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA), the ‘Public Sector’ organisations (PS) and the local Hindu participants, to examine (a) their perceptions on the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* for the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri (Festival) and its site (see Sections 6.2 and 7.2) and (b) their attitudes towards the impacts of promoting and developing the Festival and its site for more tourists not of the Hindu faith (see Sections 6.3 and 7.3). The following sub-sections concentrate on the research findings of the journey to and from Ganga Talao component as well as the visit to Ganga Talao component as commoditisation is more likely to impact on the authenticity of the participants’ religious experiences during these two components of the Festival. The evaluation of the responses of these stakeholders helps in understanding what experiences at the Festival are characterised as authentic and what should be preserved in these components of the Festival if the Festival and site are further commoditised. For ease of presentation, the qualitative research findings conducted with the two sets of stakeholders, RAs and PS, are initially discussed

followed by the quantitative results of the surveys with the local Hindu residents (participants). This research, by considering the perceived authenticity of experiences within a religious festival and pilgrimage context through the lens of the local residents/adherents, has expanded our understanding of the perceived authenticity of experiences within a religious festival and pilgrimage.

8.3.2 The perceived authenticity of the religious experiences for the local Hindu participants

8.3.2.1 *An introduction*

Religious festivals, like other festival/event products, are unique in regard to their content and context. The experiences of the “unique and true” qualities of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri are what the Mauritian Hindu participants seek for and they are what make the experiences authentic. Whilst much research on the authenticity of festival/events is looked at from the tourism perspective, the research for this Thesis looks at the authenticity of the religious experiences of the local Hindu participants using the views of three sets of stakeholders. Three broader themes that emerged from the analyses of the interviews with the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the ‘Public Sector’ organisations (PS) are (1) ‘authentic’ religious experiences, (2) ‘authentic’ physical experiences and (3) ‘authentic’ social experiences. The discussion on these themes will also include the views of the local Hindu participants, from the quantitative surveys, on the perceived existential authenticity of the religious experiences to assess whether their views are in consensus or in conflict with the other two stakeholders (RAs and PS). The views of the three sets of stakeholders provide overall views of what they considered to be the perceived *authentic nature of the religious experiences* for the local Hindu community, which if lost, would have a significant detrimental impact on their religious experiences and should therefore be preserved.

8.3.2.2 *The ‘authentic’ religious experiences*

The constituent that has emerged from the analyses of the two sets of stakeholders’ interviews, both the RAs and PS, is ‘undertaking devotional practices’ (see Sections 6.2.2.1.1 and 6.2.2.1.2). This constituent refers to the specific religious practices undertaken by the participants during the Festival to showcase or express their devotion for their religion; these being unique and having meaningful significance to their Hindus belief systems. The constituent ‘undertaking devotional practices’ was made up of the elements ‘making a personal sacrifice’, the ‘type of clothes’ and the ‘prayers of the Shiv Abhishek’. Whilst the RAs identified all these three elements, the PS considered that the pilgrimage walk, in particular the carrying of the Kanwar, thematising ‘making a personal sacrifice’, contributed to the existential authenticity of the participants’ religious

experiences. The result of the quantitative surveys revealed that the local Hindu participants also shared their views on ‘undertaking devotional practices’.

8.3.2.2.1 Making a personal sacrifice

On the element ‘making a personal sacrifice’, the PS went one step further than the RAs in concluding that the carrying of a Kanwar, by those walking, was a unique feature of the Festival which contributed to their authentic religious experiences. According to the PS, those travelling on foot used sophisticated technology attached to their Kanwars to generate electricity for lighting and music. The PS favoured such modern change. Yet, none of the members of the RAs had considered Kanwars to be an authentic feature as part of the Festival and of the participants’ religious experiences. The result of the quantitative survey with the local Hindu participants showed that the statement ‘carrying a Kanwar during the journey’ was ranked as ‘Less important’ in contributing to the authentic religious character of the Festival, as given by an overall median value of 3.00 (see Table 7.1 in Section 7.2.2). Furthermore, the results showed that the least number of participants (15.8% of the participants) undertook this activity during their journey to and from Ganga Talao (see Table 5.21 in Section 5.3.3). This activity was also ‘Less important’ in contributing to the religious experiences for the participants (see Table 5.24 in Section 5.3.3). A Mann-Whitney U test carried out established that there was a significant difference by gender and the level of importance attached to the contribution of carrying a Kanwar as the authentic character of the Festival, with male participants more likely to consider that ‘carrying a Kanwar during the journey’ ($p = 0.024$ with small effect size $r = 0.12$) was more important than female participants (see Table 5.2.5 in Section 5.3.3). The reason behind more males considering that carrying the Kanwar was important can simply be attributable to more males being likely to carry a Kanwar (23.8%) compared to the females (7.8%) (see Section 5.3.3.2), and therefore they were more likely to find it more important to the authentic character of the Festival.

Although the RAs did not relate anything in regard to carrying a Kanwar and that the participants did not consider this activity to be ‘Very important’ or ‘Important’, it is not wise to conclude that this activity was not valued by these stakeholders. In fact, while the quantitative finding revealed that only a small number of participants carried out this activity, it also indicated that for these participants the activity was highly important in contributing to the authentic character of the Festival (see Section 7.2.2). In the early days of the pilgrimage in Mauritius, a Kanwar used to be a stick attached to two water pots (Tiwari 2017) or a simple arc structure (Hawoldar and Argo 2005) carried on the shoulders by those walking. Nowadays, Kanwars have evolved to more complex structures in terms of their size, shapes, designs and decorations; some participants even pull these on wheels (Hawoldar and Argo 2005; Paramananda 2006; Tiwari 2017). Even though the complex structures demonstrate ignorance of its symbolism by those who walk (Paramananda 2006), it may be argued that it is still a means for participants to carry the sacred water and to show their interests as part of their religious and cultural identity. These structures ensure that the sacred water does not

touch the ground or become impure (Rughoobur 2014). Therefore, as long as the Kanwar serves its religious purposes, those involved in this challenging task would gain existential authentic religious experiences thereby linking them to their cultural roots.

According to Hawoldar and Argo (2005), carrying a Kanwar is a reminder of one's penance, miseries and load in life as well as one's goal to attain salvation. A Kanwar may take up to a month to complete, with those involved in its construction adopting strict disciplines and dedication (Dayal no date; Tiwari 2017). The building and carrying of a Kanwar shows the participants' sacrifice, patience, dedication, commitment and zeal to undertake the pilgrimage, thus linking them with their ancestral roots. From the literature, the hardship, trouble and fatigue are associated with one's bodily feelings (Digance 2003; Lulk 2012). The experience of these bodily feelings, as indicated Wang (1999), give rise to intra-personal authenticity as these feelings allows the individual to find their authentic self.

8.3.2.2.2 The type of clothes

Two sets of stakeholders, the RAs and the local Hindu participants, identified the wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes, during the journey to and from Ganga Talao, as an important core religious activity which contributed to the authentic religious experiences for the participants. This activity was perceived to have psychological benefits (self-purification and self-transformational), triggering a sense of uniqueness for participants who felt that, by following a set of moral principles and dogmas based on their traditional religious and cultural values within the Hindu belief system, they were cleansed and freed from their sins. In doing so alongside others, the participants felt a sense of community oneness and a sense of togetherness. This finding is similar to previous research, although the context differs. In the literature, the type of clothes worn by individuals is seen as a visual statement that carries a set of messages from which one can construct meaning (Hall 1997; Jaimangal-Jones et al. 2015). Thus, by wearing similar types of clothes and dress codes, participants maintain conformity within a group or part of a larger community to demonstrate their devotion towards their religion as well as to feel a unique sense of belonging and social identity. Essentially, it gives rise to the notion of identity (Thornton 1995) and that of being accepted by others (Jaimangal-Jones et al. 2015). In addition, by wearing white clothes during their trip, the participants are involved in 'self-making', that is they are involved in non-ordinary activities from their routine lives that allow them to connect to their religion, values, ideologies and identity. Such activity could be related to feelings of Wang's (1999) intra-personal authenticity (see Section 2.4.2.4.1).

8.3.2.2.3 Performing devotional/religious activities for the Festival

Only one member of the RAs considered that performing the sacred bath of Lord Shiva - the Shiv Abhishek which is conducted three times a day at the 108 feet statue of Mangal Mahadev at Ganga Talao from the start of the Festival until the Char Pahar ki Pooja - contributed to the participants' authentic religious experiences. The quantitative finding identified three specific religious practices at the sacred lake that were acknowledged by the participants as being 'Very important', indicated by overall median values of 1.00, in contributing to the authentic character of the Festival – these include fasting throughout the Festival, making an offering at Ganga Talao and collecting the sacred water (see Table 7.1 in Section 7.2.2). Additionally, from Table 7.1, 'following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying) at Ganga Talao' was found to be 'Important'. These five above-mentioned religious activities, as identified by the two sets of stakeholders, were perceived as contributing to the authenticity of the religious experiences for the participants to fulfil their existential desired religious obligations and duties. These practices hold unique and strong symbolic significance for the participants thereby creating an emotional relationship with Lord Shiva and connecting them to their belief systems.

These findings of the study align with the literature in that by engaging in an activity, an individual seeks an existential authentic experience, which is based on personal feelings arising during the activity (Wang 1999). During the Festival, the participants connect with their true selves and they are involved in distinct religious activities that have meaningful significance to their Hindu belief system. Noy (2004) and Shaffer (2004) stated that the discovery of one's self is essential in acquiring existential authenticity. Wang (1999) more specifically identifies this as intra-personal existential authenticity. Similarly, in the present context, the participants experience intra-personal existential authenticity that is activity-based feelings conforming to their unique cultural traditions, values and ideologies; this bolsters their existential benefits and fulfils their desired religious goals.

8.3.2.3 The 'authentic' physical experiences

Two constituents emerged from the analyses of the interviews with the RAs and PS, namely the 'atmosphere' at Ganga Talao and the 'place dependence and attachment'. First, the results of both the qualitative and quantitative methods indicated that all three stakeholders identified the 'atmosphere' at Ganga Talao in contributing to the existential 'authentic' physical experiences for the participants (see Sections 6.2.3 and 7.2.2). In relation to the elements forming the atmosphere, the RAs identified the 'soundscape in a temple', 'the naturescape and climate', 'the quality of the atmosphere' and the 'detrimental effects on the quality of the atmosphere' (see Section 6.2.3.1), whilst the PS considered 'the overall quality of the atmosphere', 'the nature of the atmosphere' and 'the ambience', at Ganga Talao (see Section 6.2.3.2). The quantitative results showed that participants perceived the sacred atmosphere at Ganga Talao to be more important compared to the natural environment at the sacred site. The atmosphere essentially relates to the intangible

properties of the physical environment at Ganga Talao. The Mann-Whitney U test carried out for these two aspects of the site, namely the sacred atmosphere and the natural environment, revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between males and females in relation to their assessment of the contribution of both aspects of the site to the authentic character of the Festival. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that the male and female participants attributed the same level of importance to the aspects of the site in terms of its contribution to the authentic character during the Festival. Second, the constituent, 'place dependence and attachment', emerged only from the analyses of the RAs' interviews and it included the 'attachment to the site', the 'sacred water' and the 'physical development of the site'. The 'place dependence and attachment' refers to the facilities present at the site that help participants in carrying out their religious activities and meet their desired religious goals, both during and outside of the Festival.

Both constituents, 'atmosphere' and 'place dependence and attachment', are key features of the sacred site leading to the existential 'authentic' physical experiences for the participants which, if lost or changed significantly, would have a significant detrimental impact on their religious experiences. These constituents, identified by the three stakeholders, offered a comprehensive insight into the nature of the physical environment/settings at the sacred site. This is an important finding of the study as the constituents, 'atmosphere' and 'place dependence and attachment', also emerged from the analyses of the RAs' interviews as part of the physical settings augmenting the religious experiences (see Sections 4.4.3.2 and 4.4.3.3). As both aforementioned constituents fall under the umbrella of physical environment/settings at Ganga Talao, the discussion of this section will complement that of Sections 8.2.4.2.2 and 8.2.4.2.3 to illustrate their contribution to the authenticity of the physical experiences.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the three sets of stakeholders considered the sacred environment/sanctity at Ganga Talao as contributing to the authentic 'physical' experiences and needs to be preserved at all times. The site offers them freedom not only to undertake religious/devotional activities, based on their belief, but also to experience the sacred physical environment, which they do not feel in their day-to-day life. These help the participants to emotionally bond with the site and its physical environment thereby reinforcing their religious and cultural values, disposition, identity and belief. As a result, the participants undergo self-transformational and transcending experiences. It is therefore important for the site to maintain its sanctity.

This study on the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri has found that both the RAs and PS are in favour of some development in view of supporting the participants with their religious activities at the site, but the over-development of the site had the potential to degrade the sacred environment at the sacred site, particularly the natural environment. Therefore, if the sacred physical environment of the site is lost or changed significantly, it will affect the image of the Festival and its site which in turn will affect the attachment of the participants thereby influencing

their disposition, pride, belief systems, identity and future visits and behaviours. Hence, this will negatively impact on the meaning of the site and its environment and the participants' perceived existential authenticity of religious experiences.

In the literature, the concept of place/space has increasingly gained importance (Budruk et al. 2008). Being in such places, adherents are likely to learn and experience their religion, through sacred activities (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 1993) and learn about identity and their self (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004). While Wang (1999) found that the sacred spaces, and the objects within them, do not relate to existential authenticity, McIntosh and Prentice (1999) observed that emotions and experiential processes were important when examining the connection of visitors to attraction sites. Similarly, Rickly-Boyd (2013) indicated that although existential authenticity is based on activities undertaken by the participant and on his/her self, it also takes into account the place within which the activities occur. More generally, when considering tourist experiences, research in existential authenticity also contends that place is important (Spark 2002; Bonn et al. 2007; Kim and Jamal 2007; Belhassen et al. 2008; Buchmann et al. 2010). Adding to this in the context of sacred place, Singh and Hashimoto (2011) have stated that a sacred space holds existential value and possesses spiritual power that is awakened through rituals and pilgrimage. The present research on the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri concurs in that the sacred place of Ganga Talao was considered by the three sets of stakeholders to give rise to the existential 'authentic' physical experiences for the participants that need to be preserved to safeguard its sacredness and sanctity. The research for this Thesis has identified specific determinants of the physical environment of the sacred place, in terms of the 'atmosphere' and the features causing the 'place dependence and attachment', which were important in meeting the needs of the participants so that they can undertake their pilgrimage and carry out rituals. The significance of the physical environment of the sacred place remains of crucial importance as it is a means for the participants to legitimise their experiences and religious belief systems and strengthen their identity which is connected to the sacred place.

Therefore, if the sacredness of the physical environment is maintained, it can lead to satisfaction and loyalty of the participants. For instance, Grappi and Montanari (2011) found that environment, which includes atmosphere and facilities, influences both satisfaction and loyalty of individuals. While satisfaction relates to the overall satisfaction by attending the festival/event, loyalty refer to the participants likelihood to revisit the festival/event in the future as well as recommend others to attend it (Son and Lee 2011; Croes and Lee 2015; Choo et al. 2016; Tanford and Jung 2017). Specific to the context of festivals, Tanford and Jung (2017) note that a strong relationship between satisfaction with the festival environment and activities and loyalty to revisit the festival. Therefore, it is believed that the sacredness of the physical environment at Ganga Talao are key in deciding whether or not the participants had satisfying authentic physical experiences and whether or not they would remain loyal to participate again in the Festival.

8.3.2.4 The ‘authentic’ social experiences

The ‘authentic’ social experiences are those social experiences which were generated from the collective activities and social interactions of an individual with others and which are unique for the Festival. The common constituents emerged from the analyses of the RAs’ and the PS interviews are the ‘dynamic and active participation’ and ‘facilitating participants’ participation’ (see Section 6.2.4). Additionally, ‘Hindu identity’ and ‘social learning’ emerged from the analyses of the interviews with the RAs and PS respectively (see Boxes 6.6 and 6.7). In terms of the quantitative survey, the local Hindu respondents indicated that joint activities with other Hindus for the statements ‘the hospitality of other Hindus who provided free food and drink, toilets and bathing facilities during the journey’ and ‘having a collective experience with other Hindus at Ganga Talao’ were important, as indicated by overall median values of 2.00, to the authentic character of the Festival (see Table 7.3 in Section 7.2). The Mann-Whitney U test, carried out on these two statements, established that there was no statistically significant difference between males and females in terms of their assessment of the contribution of joint activities to the authentic character of the Festival. The null hypothesis was not rejected. This shows that both male and female participants view joint activities as of similar importance to the character of the Festival. The first and second statements, from Table 7.3 in Section 7.2, relate to the constituents ‘facilitating participants’ participation’ and ‘Hindu identity’ respectively. In terms of social settings augmenting the religious experiences, three constituents, ‘dynamic and active participation’, ‘social learning’ and ‘facilitating participants’ participation’ emerged from the analyses of the interviews with the RAs (see Sections 4.4.4.1, 4.4.4.2 and 4.4.4.4). These constituents were previously discussed in Section 8.2.4.3.

This sub-section on authentic social experiences will examine the three constituents, ‘dynamic and active participation’, ‘Hindu identity’ and ‘facilitating participants’ participation’, from the perspective of inter-personal existential authenticity. The constituent ‘social learning’, revealed by the PS, has not been included in this section, as although it offers an ‘authentic’ social experience to participants, it is something that would not be lost during the Festival, and may in any case be experienced from the social settings of the Festival.

8.3.2.4.1 Dynamic and active participation

The constituent ‘dynamic and active participation’, which emerged from the analyses of the interviews with the RAs and PS, was perceived to contribute to the ‘authentic’ social experiences of participants. The mass gathering of participants is composed of Mauritian Hindus, Mauritian non-Hindus and other foreign Hindu visitors for the Festival. This large scale of participation is made up of like-minded individuals sharing similar goals and interests that can uniquely be felt during the period of the Festival, along the way to the sacred site and at Ganga Talao. The high proportion of local residents (Hindu and non-Hindu), together with visitors from other countries, fosters social

and community cohesion as well as a greater sense of belonging, unity and pride; this reinforces the participants' sense of *communitas*. This aligns with the literature in that the notion of *communitas* is evoked, detaching an individual from his/her social structure or social-economic background (Turner 1982; Badone and Roseman 2004; Rickly-Boyd 2012). Where the social norms are provisionally suspended, this creates social equality among the individuals (Turner and Turner 1978). It is also an opportunity for them to not only unite with other individuals from various backgrounds (Turner and Turner 1978) but also to encourage solidarity amongst them (Singh 2013). The collective participation of the individuals sharing their feelings of closeness, solidarity as well as unity can in turn confer an authentic experience during the event (Fine and Speer 1997). By experiencing a sense of *communitas*, the participants in effect gain inter-personal existential authenticity, as they gain such experiences alongside others who are their social equals (see Section 2.4.2.4.1).

8.3.2.4.2 Hindu identity

The analysis of the qualitative interview with the RAs indicates that the mass participation of the local Hindu participants for the Festival revivifies their religious identity. From the quantitative survey, the participants acknowledged that 'having a collective experience with other Hindus at Ganga Talao' was important, as indicated by overall median values of 2.00, in relation to the authenticity of the character of the Festival (see Table 7.2 in Section 7.2.2). Both qualitative and quantitative findings illustrate the importance of undertaking collective activities with others during the Festival in that these foster social bonds and the formation of the Hindu identity. The literature supports the finding that religious identities are fostered at sacred sites (Swan 1990), during large processions in religious festivals (Flueckiger 2015) or when undertaking rituals and pilgrimages (Singh 2013) while participants have common or shared experiences with others (Steiner and Reisinger 2006). This, for the participants, is an opportunity to develop social and interpersonal relationship with others, regardless of their social backgrounds. This engenders existential transformative experience for the participants thereby bringing awareness and clarity to their belief, faith, customs and role in life (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004). The research for this Thesis contributes to the literature by identifying that the Hindu identity is enriched throughout the Festival, not only at the site or during the pilgrimage. This is because during the preparation and Char Pahar ki Pooja components, the participants are also likely to meet and undertake collective religious activities with other Hindus, thus strengthening their ties with others and experiencing inter-personal existential authenticity.

8.3.2.4.3 Facilitating participants' participation

The constituent 'facilitating participants' participation' emerged as part of the analyses of the RAs interviews as an 'authentic' social experience. Also supporting this, the participants from the

quantitative survey indicated that ‘the hospitality of other Hindus who provided free food and drink, toilets and bathing facilities during the journey’ were ‘Important’, as indicated by overall median values of 2.00, (see Table 7.3 in Section 7.2.2). In effect, it is the benevolent services provided by volunteers (Hindus and non-Hindus residents as well as various organisations), along the pilgrimage route and at Ganga Talao, that contributes to the ‘authentic’ social experiences for the participants. These services help the participants with their basic needs during their trip allowing them to focus on their religious goals. The provision of these services for the Festival fosters interaction among the participants and between the participants and the volunteers. In literature, volunteers are often praised (Morgan 2008) for their involvement in the offering of voluntary services to others, for example by cleaning, cooking, serving food etc. (Buzinde et al. 2014). Buzinde et al. (2014) found that both volunteers and participants gained experiences which may differ during their encounters. This difference arose between the volunteers and the participants in that the volunteer experiences a renewal of self which indicates an act of selflessness whilst the pilgrims feel that the services that are provided facilitate them connected to their spiritual commitments (Buzinde et al. 2014). The research for this Thesis furthers the study of Buzinde et al. (2014) in that volunteer and participants in the Festival experience intra-personal authenticity as both feel equal, having left behind their social status. Both volunteers and participants collectively enjoy pleasant and unique existential ‘authentic’ social experiences with heightened community spirit and identity.

8.3.3 The perceived impacts of commoditisation on the authenticity of religious experiences

8.3.3.1 *An introduction*

This sub-section examines the perceived possible impacts of any future commoditisation resulting from an increase in the number of tourists attending the Festival. It discusses the findings of the qualitative interviews with the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the ‘Public Sector’ organisations (PS) and the quantitative survey of local Hindu residents/participants who had participated in the Festival. The sub-section focuses on (1) the perceived possible impacts of promoting and developing the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri festival (Festival) and its site for more tourists, (2) the perceived outcomes of an increased number of these tourists on the authentic nature of the religious experiences at the Festival and its site, and (3) the perceived possible outcomes/broader impacts that may result from the development of the Festival.

Over the years, several promotional activities have been undertaken by Governmental, private and religious organisations to develop the Festival and Ganga Talao as a tourist attraction. These organisations have made potential tourists aware of the Festival and its site through their websites or through other marketing media such as brochures and visitor guides. An example of the

experiences offered by the Festival to tourists is the online campaign by the Veranda Leisure and Hospitality hotel group (VLH). This private sector organisation operates seven hotels, ranging from three to five stars, on the island of Mauritius (Rogers 2018; Veranda Resorts Blog 2018). Their online advertising campaign identifies seven experiences on the company's website as the reasons why the Festival is a 'must-participate' event for tourists, as presented in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3: The experiences available to tourists through participating in the Festival

Types of experiences	Description
1. To meet the pilgrims	Those who decide to walk can join the procession to the sacred lake. They will mix with the crowd and will share unique moments with the local Hindu devotees such as chatting with them and learning more about the Festival as well as experiencing the convivial atmosphere. There is no point to feel strange as there are increasing number of local non-Hindus who participate to fulfil their curiosity.
2. To experience the culture and traditions	As a participant, there is an opportunity to witness the Hindus performing rituals and learn about their ancestral traditions.
3. To enjoy the tasty breaks along the way	Local volunteers build tents all over the island to offer free food and drinks to pilgrims. These services along the pilgrimage route cannot be obtained outside the Festival period.
4. To undertake a healthy walk	By walking during the evening, one can be immersed into the Festival's spirit. A shuttle service, albeit for a fee, is also provided to visitors who choose to catch a ride home.
5. To experience the sacred site at night	It is highly recommended to undertake the walk at night or early in the morning. Not only, one will avoid the hot temperature during the daytime but also experience the mystical aura at the site such as the lights that are reflected in the water, the religious songs that are played and the smoke and aroma emanated from the incense sticks.
6. To immerse in a new world	Participants who walk can be seen through their final struggle along the large roads leading to the site. Their journeys come to an end when they are welcomed by the gigantic statue of Lord Shiva. Entering the site, the participants are immersed into the music and prayers and can visit the lake and the temple(s); they are carried away into a new world.
7. To have a unique experience	The walk is a unique experience which cannot be lived elsewhere. It can be experienced alone or alongside one's partner, family members and friends. <i>"You will leave the place in bewilderment, as if waking up from a mysterious dream..."</i>

Source: (Veranda Resorts Blog 2018)

Table 8.3 gives details of the seven experiences which are offered by the Festival and which are being promoted to tourists for them to participate. Arguably, VLH has identified authentic experiences tourists might be/are seeking to gain in the Festival. Based on these seven authentic experiences set out by this organisation, tourists are encouraged to take part in two components of the Festival, in particular the journey to and from Ganga Talao and the visit to Ganga Talao. The next paragraph will relate to the authentic experiences tourists are seeking out in the Festival and

will be adapted to the current research findings of this Thesis. This will give a general picture of how an increase in the number of tourists, through the process of commoditisation, will impact on the three themes of the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* ('authentic' religious experiences, 'authentic' physical experiences and 'authentic' social experiences) for the local participants.

First, in regard to the 'authentic' religious experiences, VLH is encouraging tourists to 'observe' the local Hindu participants while undertaking their rituals at the sacred site. In doing, tourists may act as 'voyeurs' when the Hindu participants are performing their rites. Second, in terms of the 'authentic' physical experiences, VLH is proposing that tourists walk at night or early morning so that they are able to experience the atmosphere and ambiance along the pilgrimage route and at the site. Though this proposal, tourists will be able to experience the sacred physical environment at the site at night and early morning. Third, in respect of the 'authentic' social experiences, VHL is expecting tourists to join the pilgrimage on foot alongside other Hindu participants. In doing so, tourists can experience social learning and the crowd, bolster their social experiences by interacting with other Hindus and non-Hindus and experience the free food and drink which are provided.

Overall, such attempts at promoting and developing the Festival as a tourist attraction, by VLH and other organisations and cultural brokers, may potentially risk the lessening of the religious experiences of the local Hindu participants and in turn this may have detrimental effects that can distort the authenticity of their religious experiences and may erode the sacredness of the site. The subsequent sections will explore the key findings of the three sets of stakeholders (RAs, PS and the local Hindu participants) on the potential impacts of developing and promoting the Festival and its site for more tourists.

8.3.3.2 *The encouragement of tourists at the Festival and its site*

The qualitative findings of the interviews with both the RAs and the PS showed that these stakeholders considered that tourists not of the Hindu faith should be encouraged to attend the Festival (see Section 6.3.2). The results of the quantitative survey with the local Hindu participants in the Festival indicated that the potential outcomes of a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival were not thought to be problematic (see Section 7.3.2). Overall, the findings of this showed unanimity in the perception of the three sets of stakeholders on the encouragement of more tourists at the Festival and site with some caveats.

8.3.3.2.1 Overall perspectives of the RAs and PS on the encouragement of tourists at the Festival and its site

In order to diversify the current tourism portfolio to attract 2 million international tourists by 2020, the Government of Mauritius have proposed to promote religious festivals and sites to enhance their competitive advantage within the tourism sector (Ramkissoon and Uysal 2011; Tourism Tattler Trade Journal 2012). The findings of the interviews revealed that some the RAs are already promoting the Festival and its site for more tourists. In addition to promoting the Festival and its site through international media, a Spiritual retreat is being constructed at the sacred site that would support tourists with food and lodging facilities. This visitor attraction, for local residents and international tourists, is being developed on 16 acres of land at Ganga Talao and will have a museum, Yoga centre, library etc. (Ramdhun et al. 2013). Besides such attempts, the RAs were in favour of promoting and developing the Festival and site for more tourists not of the Hindu faith. Similar views were shared by the PS, with the exception of one representative who considered that the Festival should not encourage those coming for sightseeing or fun and should only target spiritual tourism.

The findings of the research also showed that the RAs supported the encouragement of tourists not of the Hindu faith to attend the Festival as the Hindus believe in ‘*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*’, a doctrinal practice of Hinduism, meaning that the world is one big family and as a Hindu, it is one’s duty to embrace any individual, irrespective of their religion, as part of one’s family. Notwithstanding Hinduism is reputed for being tolerant (Harman 2013), the Mauritian people in general are also known to be tolerant and respectful towards others irrespective of their religious beliefs (Cleary 2011; Ng Tseung-Wong 2018). The inherent characters of the Mauritian Hindus are rooted not only on religious principles, dogmas and values but also on the local cultural aspects such as social norms and cultural beliefs. Such characteristics foster a spirit of tolerance, acceptance and respect towards others, may it be other Mauritians or tourists.

8.3.3.2.2 Perceived positive outcomes on the encouragement of tourists from the three sets of stakeholders

The qualitative findings of the RAs’ interviews showed that their view was that an increase in the number of tourists, not of the Hindu faith, to the Festival will mutually benefit the local Hindu participants and the tourists. Through social interaction, the RAs considered that the participants and the tourists would have the opportunity to learn and share religious values (cultural exchange) and foster social harmony. One of the three representatives of the PS also considered that the Festival encouraged ‘social learning’ (see Sections 4.4.4.2 and 6.2.4.2) as both participants and tourists can benefit from each other through social interactions and cultural exchanges.

The results of the quantitative survey with the local Hindu participants adds to the findings of the qualitative research in that the participants noted that a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival would bring about three potential outcomes (see Table 7.8 in Section 7.3.2.1). In particular, if there was a significant increase in the number of tourists at the Festival, they would need improved physical facilities (e.g. roads, pavements, toilet facilities). Also, the participants expressed no concerns to have tourists at the site either while they would perform their rituals or in terms of the social benefits they share with other Hindus during Festival. The Mann-Whitney U test, conducted to investigate the difference in the answers given by males and females for these three potential outcomes in respect of a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what is happening at the Festival, revealed that the null hypothesis is not rejected as there was no statistically significant difference by gender and the extent to which the participants agreed or disagreed with these potential outcomes. This implies that both males and females are likely to share relatively similar attitudes towards these potential outcomes from a significant increase of tourists for the Festival. The findings may suggest that the participants in general considered that tourists would feel integrated and have the opportunity to experience a sense of *communitas* and feel equal to the local Hindu participants during the Festival. Tolerance, acceptance and understanding would therefore prevail during the Festival between the participants and the tourists based on the religious and cultural nature of the Mauritian Hindu community.

The findings of both qualitative and quantitative research align with the literature in that when two distinct cultures are in contact, acculturation and cultural drift may take place (see Section 2.5.1). Local festivals offer the local residents and visitors the opportunity to enhance cultural and educational benefits (Getz 1997; Yolal et al. 2016) that can increase their existential well-being (Yolal et al. 2016). Previous studies have showed that festivals offer innumerable intangible benefits to a community in that they can reinforce social cohesion, solidarity, bonds, belonging, pride and identity (Mill and Morrison 2002; Jeong and Santos 2004; Gursoy et al. 2004; Yolal et al. 2012; Ramkissoon 2015; Yolal et al. 2016). Also, from a different perspective, tourists visiting sacred sites can foster tolerance and peaceful rapport as well in such environment (Nyaupane et al. 2015) but can also lead to tensions and clashes between individuals of different faith (Timothy 2013).

The research on the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri has revealed that all three stakeholder groups agreed that the participants can benefit from ‘social learning’, which can contribute to the ‘authentic’ social experiences for the participants during the Festival (see Section 6.2.4.2). This finding furthers the literature in that it is believed that both participants and tourists, during their liminal trip, would forgo their social status and be on the same pedestal to undertake similar or communal activities. As such, both sets of individuals are likely to bolster their ties with each other to perform the joint activities and can therefore experience inter-personal existential authenticity. Consequently, participants and tourists would follow similar behaviours and

disciplines eliciting a sense of community oneness and a perception of shared identity. As a result of such collective feelings, they would experience intense feelings thereby augmenting their existential religious experiences.

8.3.3.2.3 Perceived concerns of the three sets of stakeholders on the significant increase in the number of tourists at the Festival

The findings of the three sets of stakeholders indicated that it is thought that an increase in the number of tourists attending the Festival and site will stimulate positive existential experiences and benefits for the participants. Yet, these three groups of stakeholders also expressed concerns regarding the encouragement of tourists. The RAs expressed concerns on the possible commercial activities such as the selling of goods and services at the sacred site. The RAs made it clear that such activities must be strictly prohibited at Ganga Talao as this would distort the sacredness/sanctity of the site and affect the religious activities of the participants.

Both RAs and PS expressed similar concerns on the increase in the number of tourists, not of the Hindu faith, in regard to maintaining proper ethical behaviour in terms of tourists dressing properly, receiving the same treatment as the local Hindu participants and respecting the site. Furthering this, the PS considered that tourists should partake in religious activities like that of the local Hindu participants, such as undertaking rituals and being involved in singing kirtans and bhajans. One representative of the PS suggested that tourists not of the Hindu faith should be educated prior to the Festival as this would help them to understand the dos and don'ts of the Festival; this could minimise the detrimental impact of a significant increase in the number of tourists for the Festival. Other caveats were identified from the findings of the quantitative research with the local Hindu participants. The local Hindu participants agreed on four potential outcomes and worries, Table 7.8, indicated by an overall median value of 2.00, on: the commercialisation of 'en-route' services, the tourists being disrespectful in the way they behave and dress at the site, the Festival being turned into a 'spectacle' and an increase in the number of hawkers selling items at Ganga Talao. A Mann-Whitney U test, conducted to investigate the difference on the four potential outcomes and worries given by males and females, indicated that there was statistically significant difference by gender only for one potential outcome and worry concerning an increase in the number of hawkers selling items at Ganga Talao ($p = 0.006$ with small effect size $r = 0.14$), with males being more likely to agree to have more hawkers than female participants. More hawkers could mean more social opportunities. This view tallies with the result that males are more likely to participate in the Festival for social reasons than females (see Section 5.2.2.3), and it suggests that the males would be more likely to support other social opportunities provided by the Festival. Despite these potential outcomes and worries, the results demonstrate that, overall, all the three sets of stakeholders shared similar concerns in regard to developing and promoting the Festival and its site for more tourists.

Commoditisation can have both positive and negative impacts as outlined in Section 2.5.2. For instance, Shackley (2001) noted that commercialisation at a religious site, like Lourdes, can benefit the whole community who earn a living through the sale of relics. Nevertheless, commoditisation can also have some negative impacts on the site as the place itself loses the sense of meaning when rituals and artefacts are commercialised for visitors (Vukonić 2002). In the primary research undertaken for this Thesis, the sale of goods at the site is not allowed. Yet the fear remains that with an increase in the number of tourists, things may change, leading to the loss of the sacred physical environment at Ganga Talao. Other concerns by the three sets of stakeholders included the undesirable behaviours and favouritism of tourists at the site. This is in line with literature in that visitor impacts strongly depend on what they do at the site and not on the visitor numbers (Garrod et al. 2006; Wong et al. 2016). In a study at the Buddhist sacred site of Pu-Tuo-Shan in China, Wong et al. (2016) found that inappropriate or disrespectful behaviour included lighting a cigarette, bringing wine, littering, shouting, spitting or destroying physical property. Such disrespectful behaviours were perceived as burdens at sacred sites (Wong et al. 2016). As a solution, codes of conduct are often imposed at sacred sites to stop visitors from carrying out unbecoming behaviour. The research for this Thesis extends our knowledge on unwelcome behaviour to include favouritism of visitors over locals. One way to resolve such behaviour of tourists not of the Hindu faith is to educate them prior to their visit on how to behave like a local Hindu participant during the Festival. Education of tourists has been documented in literature to address behavioural characteristics as part of the solutions to mass tourism and pilgrimage. Singh (2002) stated that tourists can be educated through the display of code of ethics or conduct at the sacred site on billboards. Alternatively, the code of conduct, they are expected to adhere to, should be effectively communicated to them prior to their visit. The literature corroborates with the suggestions of these enquiries regarding the education of visitors to maintain acceptable behaviour at the sacred site.

8.3.3.3 The possible impacts of tourism development on the authentic nature of the religious experiences

The results of the qualitative research showed that all except two representatives of the RAs and all the organisations from the PS agreed that there would be no negative impacts on the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* if the number of tourists, not of the Hindu faith, were to increase significantly along the routes and at Ganga Talao as the participants tend to focus on undertaking their pilgrimages and prayers and so they are not distracted by others (see Section 6.3.3). More specifically, the RAs suggested that the presence of tourists would not distract the participants during their religious activities; this is because the participants would focus on their devotional practices. As the participants are already in a crowd and are praying with other Hindus, they will carry out their religious activities they ‘normally’ would. Also, the Hindu religion is open, meaning that the Hindus welcome any non-Hindus who want to take part in any religious activities during the Festival. Similar findings were shared by the Mauritian Hindu participants as part of the quantitative research. They also disagreed, as indicated by a median value of 3.00, that more

tourists would impact on their overall religious experiences in terms of affecting their ability to carry out rituals, adversely affecting the ambience along the way to and from Ganga Talao, threatening their ability to meditate, threatening the sacredness of the site, and causing congestion (see Section 7.3.3). A Mann-Whitney U test, investigating the difference by gender on the impact on their overall religious experiences, revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between gender for only one statement, with the male participants relatively more likely to think that ‘more tourists will adversely affect the overall ambience of the walk and this will impact negatively upon my religious experience’ compared to female participants ($p = 0.025$ with small effect size $r = 0.11$). As such, the presence of an increase in the number of tourists was not perceived to affect the aspects of physical settings to and from or at the sacred site and the participants’ ability to perform devotional/religious activities, which were identified as the ‘authentic’ physical experiences and ‘authentic’ religious experiences (see Section 8.3.2). This may be a reason why stakeholders, except for two organisations, did not foresee any negative impact from increased tourist numbers. In the literature, it is also found that an increase in the number of visitors does not necessarily negatively affect religious sites, its environment or the satisfaction of the religious visitors (Stănciulescu and Țîrca 2010). In fact, an increase in the number of tourists can benefit the local community, the development and the image of the site (Ahmed 1992; Stănciulescu and Țîrca 2010). This finding also accords with the results reported in this Thesis in that the RAs noted the image of the Festival will be more positive as more tourists will propagate the positive image, while the PS noted that with such an increase, the local Hindu community will benefit as accessibility into and out of the site will improve (see Section 6.3.3).

The qualitative research conducted for this study of the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri identified some negative impacts, in particular the interviewees were concerned that tourists would not conform to rules and regulations at Ganga Talao - by wearing inappropriate clothes, eating non-vegetarian food and smoking at the sacred site - and that this behaviour may result in a feeling of dismay among the Hindu participants in the Festival which could potentially result in conflicts or tensions with these tourists. If such concerns were to materialise, then it will impact on the ‘authentic’ religious experiences for the participants as the type of clothes worn during the Festival was perceived as a core religious activity which contributed to the ‘authentic’ religious experiences for the participants (see Section 8.3.2.2.2), and fasting throughout the Festival was very important in contributing to the authentic character of the Festival (see Section 8.3.2.2.3). Similar concerns have been reported in the literature. For instance, Wong et al. (2016) stated that at religious sites, some visitors seeking non-religious experiences, for example cultural experiences, may sometimes not behave respectfully or may violate rules at the religious sites either because they are ignorant or they lack focus.

To regulate the behaviour of visitors, religious sites often adopt proactive and reactive measures, for example by imposing a dress code, imposing entrance fees, restricting visitors’ activities and controlling visitors’ flow (Nolan and Nolan 1992; Garrod et al. 2006; Shackley 2001, 2002, 2006;

Mason 2005; Wong et al. 2016). The finding of this Thesis is similar to the literature in that the RAs emphasised that guiding the behaviour of the visitors and controlling the number of participants entering and leaving the site was important in maintaining the sacredness of the site. More specifically on behaviour, they indicated that tourists not of Hindu faith, should behave like local Hindu participants in that they should dress properly at Ganga Talao, respect the sanctity of the site, fast, pray, undertake rituals, and adopt values that are moral and/or pertain to the customs of Hinduism. Yet, the findings differ to the literature on the imposition of entrance fees with the RAs indicating that the imposition of entrance fees could negatively affect the purity and the serenity of the religious atmosphere at Ganga Talao. The results of the quantitative surveys also revealed that the Hindu participants agreed, as revealed by an overall median value of 2.00, that 'if, when observing the Festival, tourists are respectful of our Hindu heritage in the way they behave and dress then there is no problem' (see Section 7.3.2). For this statement, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was no statistically significant difference by gender and the extent to which the participants agreed that tourists be respectful of the Hindu heritage, if there is a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what is happening at the Festival. This means that the males and females were likely to share relatively similar attitudes towards this potential outcome from a significant increase of tourists for the Festival.

Ensuring that tourists are respectful at the site may require proactive measures. For instance, the imposition of codes of conduct and rules at religious sites are proactive measures, requiring visitors to act in a certain manner (Wong et al. 2016). A suggested proactive measure by the RAs is better signage to help visitors understand what is required of them at the site so that they do not disturb the participants at the site, for instance a notice board stating 'no shoes are allowed' inside temples and in the lake. Additionally, it was proposed by the RAs and PS that in order to minimise any adverse effects from tourists' misbehaviour, the tour operators and hotels should inform and educate tourists not of Hindu faith prior to their visit to the sacred site. It is contended that although not all behaviours of the visitors can be controlled, it will deter some ignorant visitors of acting in ways which may negatively affect the participants' religious experiences at the sacred site.

Another impact, as noted by the RAs was that an increase in the number of tourists for the Festival will create more traffic jams on the way to and from the sacred site and at the site, therefore adding to the problem of limited space on the road to Ganga Talao and at the site. A solution, proposed by both the RAs and the PS, was to improve the 'festival settings' along the route and at the site in terms of enlarging the roads and pavement towards the sacred site and providing more parking spaces at Ganga Talao, to cater for any extra vehicles. Previous literature has revealed that tourism can exert pressure on a sacred site, with congestion being a main factor affecting adherents' experiences (Shackley 1998), alongside other factors such as increase in overuse of natural resources, parking and insufficient infrastructure (Orbasli 2000; Caust and Vecco 2017). Where there is heavy traffic, there may be a need to provide different access routes to tourists (Stănciulescu and Țîrca 2010), delineate pedestrian areas (Raghunathan and Sinha 2006), adopt

queue control methods (Shackley 2003), and adopt circular routes in and out of the site to prevent bottlenecks thereby ensuring flow (Singh 2002). This helps to properly manage the flow of participants. The research for this Thesis reveals that in the likely event of an increase number of tourists at the site during the Festival, change is likely to occur due to festival settings. Notwithstanding, these changes could negatively affect the 'atmosphere' in terms of the flora and fauna, scenery and the spatial layout of the site (see Section 6.2.3.1), there is also a need to minimise undesirable impacts by controlling the festival settings and preserving the atmosphere along the route and at the site. The PS recommended that vehicles should be parked at least 1 km from Ganga Talao, ensuring that more people can access the site, albeit by foot, without affecting the flora and fauna, scenery and the spatial layout at or around the site. This is also a proactive measure requiring adherents to undertake actions, by parking further away from the sacred site and walking to the site, to protect the physical settings at or around Ganga Talao. Such measures will ensure that the sacred environment/sanctity along the way to and at Ganga Talao contribute to the authentic 'physical' experiences of the participants during the Festival. Conversely if, through an increase in the number of tourists, there is a negative impact on the meaning associated with the site and its environment, this can in turn affect the participants' perceived existential authenticity of religious experiences during the Festival.

8.3.3.4 The impacts of the possible perceived outcomes of the development of the Festival and site on the Hindu participants

Regarding the changes that would be acceptable from an increase in the number of tourists for the Festival, the qualitative results revealed that only one organisation from the RA, ORO2, stated one acceptable change would be to improve the road infrastructure at, and around, Ganga Talao as there are concerns about traffic problems. It was proposed that the Government build separate roads for pilgrims and vehicles, as this would potentially help minimise the negative impacts of tourism on the participants. The literature supports that the government play a key role in implementing specific policies and strategies for the upkeep of the industry in a destination (Pearce 1989; Page 2003). With the development of tourism, it is inevitable that certain developments may arise, in terms of hospitality services, infrastructure and access (Timothy and Olsen 2006). Therefore, it is for the government to carefully develop, manage and promote tourism without negatively affecting the sacredness and sanctity of the religious institutions and festivals (ESCAP 2003). In this Thesis, while concerns were not shared by the other stakeholders from RAs and PS requiring the involvement of the Government, they believed that consequences, if any, will be more positive as more tourists will bring more spiritual benefits through their participation in the Festival. In return, the tourists would also benefit by having a better understanding and appreciation of the Festival and the Hindu culture.

The quantitative results revealed that the local Hindu participants agreed, overall median value of 2.00, that it was worth having more infrastructure development, parking facilities and other

provisions so that the ‘spectacle’ of the Festival can be better observed, in return for the potential loss of some of the ‘religious/spiritual’ atmosphere of the Festival to gain the economic benefits of having more tourists, and thereby more tourist spending. (see Section 7.3.4). The Mann-Whitney U test used to investigate the differences by gender, revealed that there was no significant difference between Hindu males and Hindu females as to their level of agreement on the advantages of having more tourists. This implies that both genders shared similar views as to what they would potentially agree to lose at the site. The agreements to these benefits indicate that the participants, who participated in the Festival, do not think that these developments may adversely affect their religious experiences. Additionally, from the quantitative results the local Hindu participants, who participated in the Festival, strongly agreed on losing some of the religious atmosphere in exchange of more cleaning staff at the sacred place to keep it clean at all times. Again, from the Mann-Whitney U test, it was found that there was no significant difference between Hindu males and Hindu females as to losing some of the religious atmosphere in exchange of more cleaning staff, if there are more tourists; therefore, both genders shared similar views. This shows that the aspect of cleanliness was of great concern to the local Hindu participants during the Festival. On cleanliness, the qualitative results were similar as the RAs acknowledged that in fact, there are now more people who are involved in cleaning and throwing away the ritual waste (see Section 6.2.3). The cleanliness of the site was important as it has implications on the overall evaluations and quality of the existential ‘authentic’ religious experiences for the participants.

On the organisations’ expectation of any tensions (conflicts) arising between the local Hindu participants and tourists if there was a significant increase in the number of tourists for the Festival, the qualitative finding revealed that all the stakeholders from the PS and the RAs, except for one organisation (ORO2), thought that there would be no tensions/conflicts arising, especially if tourists respect customs and traditions. Yet, situations which could create tensions or fights were also identified. This included circumstances where visitors use inappropriate language or inappropriate clothing, where the Festival is commercialised for economic gain or for other purposes, when people do not follow traffic codes during the Festival or where extremists of other religions visit the site. Some of these circumstances have been previously discussed, for instance the wearing of white clothes worn during the Festival were previously identified as an ‘authentic’ religious experience, as symbolising purity (see Section 6.2.2.1). As such, the wearing of any inappropriate clothing may have an effect on the participants’ existential authentic religious experiences. Also, commercialisation of the Festival was previously found to have a detrimental effect on the quality of the atmosphere (see Section 6.2.3.1). Through commercialisation, the experiences of the atmosphere will also be affected, thereby impacting on the participants’ existential authenticity of religious experiences. Lastly the issue of traffic, was also identified as a possible impact on the authentic features and characteristics of the Festival and site (see Section 6.3.3.1). All three circumstances, in addition to affecting the authentic religious experiences of participants were thought to cause tensions as they affect the sacredness and sanctity of Festival. The issue of extremism is however a new factor, as it has not previously been mentioned or reported. This

differs from the overall view that Hinduism is an open religion accepting every devotee coming to the sacred site. However, if such devotees cause trouble, then it will affect not only authentic religious experiences but also affect the sacredness and sanctity of the Festival and site.

Solutions proposed by the RAs include the involvement of the Government to deal with any tension arising during the Festival, regulating possible conflicts by communicating to the public through the media. The PS added that the Government should deal with any tensions that arise, for example by limiting the number of tourists at certain touristic places, by allocating different times for hotels that organise trips to Ganga Talao during the Festival, by stopping to target tourists for the period of the Festival if they misbehave, by building other roads leading to the site so that vehicles and participants who walk travel on separate routes thereby improving the flow of traffic, by imposing restrictions on the number of tourist cars entering Ganga Talao, or by obliging tourists to park their cars 3 km away from the site and walk so that this does not affect the pilgrimage. The literature argues that policing may require considerable force as it is required to deal with an ever increasing number of participants (Singh 2002). Also, Singh (2002) indicated that the use of media can have a wider effect by widely communicating messages to locals and tourists more effectively. This aligns with the findings of this Thesis in terms of possible ways to deal with conflict which may arise between the local Hindu participants and tourists if there was a significant increase in the number of tourists for the Festival.

8.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

8.4.1 Background

This sub-section presents the new (revised/updated) conceptual framework that has been developed from the empirical findings of *Chapters 4 to 7* and the literature analysis. The initial conceptual framework, based on Levitt's (1981) model and Kotler's (1994) conceptualisation of the product levels, as discussed in Section 2.6.5, has been modified in the light of the empirical findings. Figure 8.5 is the revised conceptual framework that furthers our understanding of the perceived potential impacts of the future commoditisation of the Festival and site on the local Hindu participants' religious experiences.

8.4.2 The context

The outer layer of the framework is the context. It comprises (1) the political context, (2) the economic context and (3) the social context. These three contexts relate to general environmental situation acting as internal/external forces on Mauritian society (see Sections 1.2.2 and 2.6.2). In general, religious or socio-cultural organisations have little or no control on these contexts and need to adapt themselves in order to manage and deliver the festival experiences for the attendees. In the

context of the Festival, religious authorities need to ensure these contexts do not have social implications on the local Hindu participants that would affect the nature of the religious experiences sought and gained by the local adherents.

8.4.3 Commoditisation

The second component of this conceptualisation is commoditisation. It would arise from governmental decisions/actions to develop the tourism sector/cultural tourism in Mauritius for economic benefit and externality benefits (e.g. more jobs and business opportunities for local people). In this study, the focus of commoditisation has been viewed from an intervention to increase the number of tourists not of the Hindu faith at the Festival. However, there are already attempts by the government, religious authorities and public organisations to promote and develop the Festival for more tourists. An example of what is currently promoted to tourists by Veranda Leisure and Hospitality hotel group (VLH) in Mauritius is given in Section 8.3.3, showing the experiences available to tourists through their participation in the Festival. This process of commoditisation is likely to impact on the Festival either positively or negatively if it is more widely promoted, and eventually sold as a product, in order to bring in more tourists. Commoditisation was accepted by all the stakeholders involved in the research with caveats, as shown in Figure 8.5. Commoditisation is expected to affect the nature of the religious offerings of the Festival and its site.

8.4.4 Religion

Religion plays an important and influential role in many people's lives. It offers people, sharing the same belief system, the opportunity to engage in common religious activities and practices. In this study, Smart's (1996, 1998) model was used to study the nature of Hindu religion. Pilgrimages to sacred sites and celebrating festivals in the Hindu religion are an integral part of many Hindus' lives. During these occasions or celebrations, many people join together to perform religious practices. It is the doctrine of a religion, its teachings and beliefs, which are the focus for the local Hindu participants in the Festival. The doctrine underpins what the followers should do and how they should behave in order to practice and maintain their belief system. It also offers an individual the opportunity to experience his/her true sense of self or to feel a sense of belonging. Such feelings can generally be manifested in festivals, at sacred sites, or even during pilgrimages. The traditional, and periodic, festivals, pilgrimages or visits to sacred sites in turn ensure the perpetuation of the religion. To help this, religious authorities play a significant role in setting out what is expected or required of the participants, in order to recreate the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri, as celebrated in India along the banks of the Ganges River. As such, it is the religion which sets out what is authentic during the Festival.

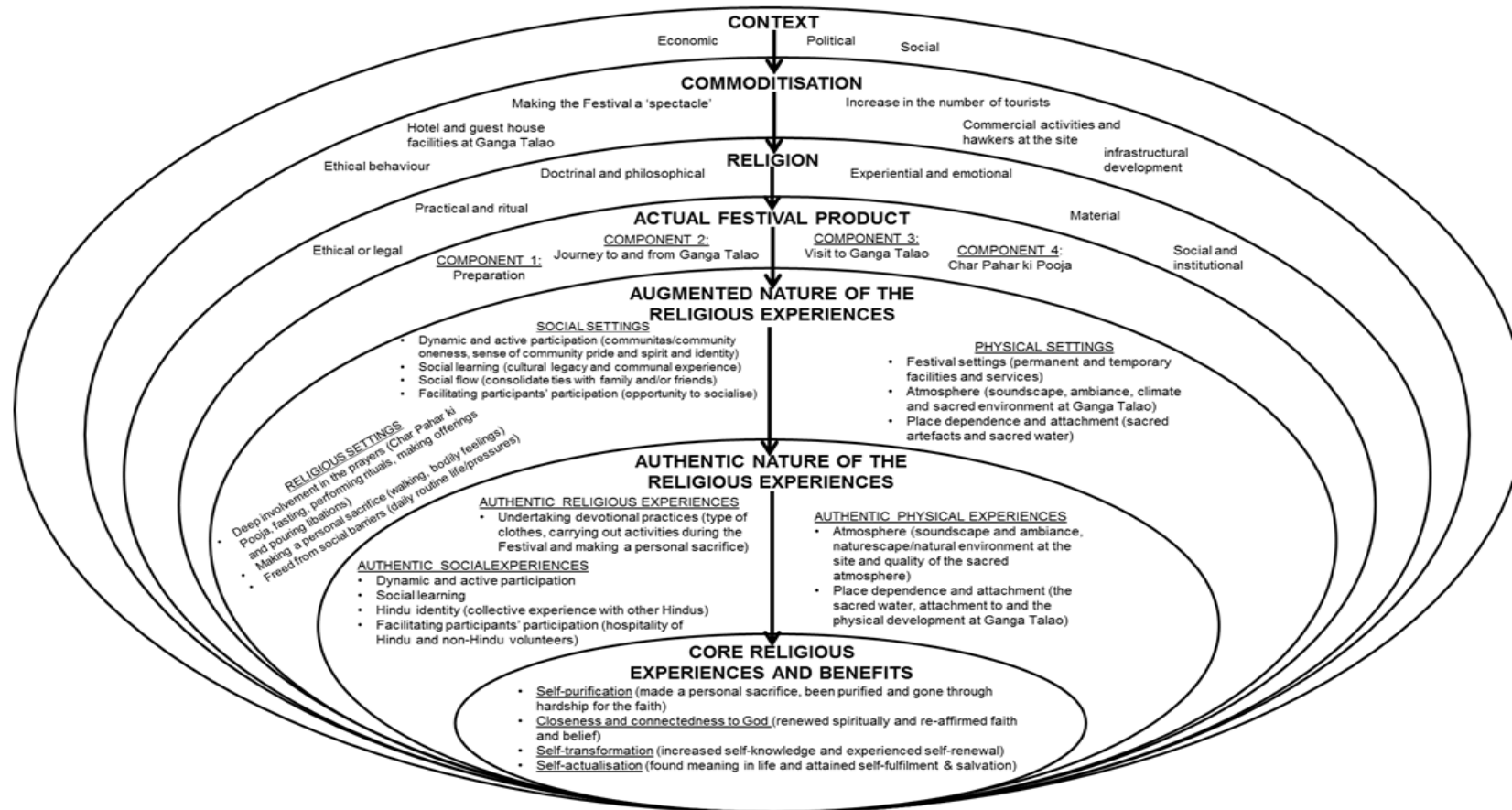


Figure 8.5: The revised conceptual framework

Source: (Author 2019)

8.4.5 Actual Festival product

The fourth layer moving inward is the *actual Festival product* which consists of the four components of the Festival: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja. The *actual Festival product* relates to what the Festival is offering to the local Hindu participants allowing them to undertake activities and gain different levels of religious experience. It includes all the four physical components which form the basis of the Festival participants' experiences and makes up the entirety of the Festival activities.

8.4.6 Augmented nature of the religious experiences

The *augmented nature of the religious experiences*, the fifth layer from the outer layer, relates to what heightens the 'normal' or 'mundane' experiences of the local Hindu participants during the Festival. It is what raises the levels of religious experience that might be gained if the individuals visited the site on a normal day. The 'augmented' religious experiences offered by the Festival are focused mainly on two phases, namely the journey to and from Ganga Talao and at the sacred site, because firstly such experience is essentially sought and gained away from the home settings, and secondly, the RAs indicated that the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* for the participants was mainly focused on these two phases. The religious experiences were seen to be augmented through the physical settings (festival settings, atmosphere, place dependence and attachment), social settings (dynamic and active participation, social learning, social flow and facilitating participants' participation that bolster the social engagement) and religious settings (deeply involved in prayers, making a personal sacrifice, freed from daily life and pressures). The *augmented nature of the religious experiences* relates to the adding of value to the core religious experiences, with the potential to make the Festival experiences distinct from other Hindu religious festivals and activities.

8.4.7 Authentic nature of the religious experiences

The *authentic nature of the religious experiences* is the sixth layer in this conceptualisation. It is an integral part of the Festival product. This layer relates to what makes the Festival unique, attracts the local Hindus and makes it appealing for tourists. The *authentic nature of the religious experiences* is essentially what makes the Festival what it is, as set by the RAs and the theological texts and teachings. It relates to the features of the Festival and site which, if lost or changed significantly, would have a significant detrimental impact on the religious experiences of participants. This layer is made up of three themes ('authentic' religious experiences, 'authentic' physical experiences and 'authentic' social experiences) which emerged from the interviews of the RAs and PS and the surveys of the local Hindu participants who participated in the Festival. The following elements were identified as being unique and authentic for the Festival: type of clothes worn, performing devotional/religious activities, making a personal sacrifice, atmosphere, place

dependence and attachment, dynamic and active participation, social learning, Hindu identity, facilitating participants' participation, personal 'social' opportunities and joint activities. In effect, these elements are what stand out as authentic in the Festival and are what the promoters of the Festival would sell as being unique to this Festival to attract more tourists. For instance VLH, among others, is already encouraging tourists to experience these authentic characteristics of the Festival.

8.4.8 Core religious experiences and benefits

The *core religious benefits* (inner layer) include the existential religious benefits/outcomes that the local Hindu participants gain/seek to gain through their participation in the Festival. These benefits are derived from the core religious experiences gained when the participants are involved in the devotional/religious practices during the Festival. The core religious benefits emerged from the interviews of the RAs and were examined through the responses, from the survey, on the personal feelings of the Mauritian Hindu residents who had participated in the Festival. This layer, although unchanged from the initial conceptual model, was further developed in terms of the identification of the benefits which were core to the participants to satisfy/achieve their personal religious needs and obligations: 'closeness and connectedness to God', 'self-purification', 'self-transformation' and 'self-actualisation'. These *core religious benefits*, being the essential outcomes of the Festival, are those which need maintaining whether or not there is increasing number of tourists during the Festival.

8.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has critically discussed the findings of *Chapter 2 and Chapters 4 to 7*. On the one hand, it has provided insights into the three levels of religious experience offered by the Festival using the key findings of the RAs and the local Hindu participants. On the other hand, the main finding of the three sets of stakeholders (RAs, PS and local Hindus who participated in the Festival) on the perceived authenticity of religious experiences and impact of commoditisation on these experiences were examined within the context of the literature. Several key theoretical contributions have been advanced in this study and these will be briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, this study has shown that the use of product theory from marketing, based on Levitt's (1981) typology and Kotler's (1994) conceptualisation of product levels, is a practical underlying theoretical framework for understanding the nature of the religious experiences sought and gained by the local Hindu participants during the Festival. This novel approach was based on dividing the religious experiences offered by the Festival to the Hindu participants into three levels: the *core religious experiences* and benefits, the *augmented religious experiences* and the *actual Festival product*. The *actual Festival product* helped to establish the activities the local Hindu participants

carried out during the Festival and the importance attached by participants to these activities in each of the four components of the Festival.

Secondly, the research has developed a holistic model based on Shackley's (2001) model to explore the behaviours of the participants and the importance of those behaviours in contributing to their religious experiences as part of the *actual Festival product* (the four components of the Festival: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja). This model has fully captured the patterns of participants' behaviour during the Festival in a sequential manner and helped in evaluating their overall religious experiences. Understanding the behaviours and experiences of Hindu adherents attending a religious festival and pilgrimage outside India is limited in literature and this research has bridged such gap.

Thirdly, the research applied existential authenticity derived from Wang's (1999) typology to understand the experiences/feelings of participants during the activities they undertook as part of the Festival. The study found that the religious, physical and social contexts contribute to, or influence, the authenticity of the participants' religious experiences. It should be noted that the concept of authenticity was explored from the local residents' perspectives of the Festival. This is not often the case as this concept is mainly used in tourism studies by scholars and researchers.

Fourthly, the quantitative findings of this study complement the broader themes and constituents that emerged from the qualitative research, as shown in the conceptual framework (see Figure 8.6). Hence, adopting a mixed methods approach in this research has helped in better understanding the topics under investigation. This is because, the research has assessed the relationship between different sets of stakeholders (the Mauritian Religious Authorities, the 'Public Sector' organisations and the local Hindu residents) and whether their views coincide or are in conflict with each other. The use of a mixed methods approach has therefore helped in gathering rich exploratory information from the qualitative approach and allowing cautious generalisability to the population through the quantitative method.

Fifthly, the belief and doctrinal practice of Hindus expect them to be tolerant to, and welcoming of others, thus the RAs and local Hindu residents were in favour of encouraging tourists for the Festival provided that the tourists adhered to certain behaviours, as would a Hindu participant. As a result, the study provides policymakers and religious authorities the ability to make informed decisions as to what should be preserved, in regard to the participant's religious experiences, if the Festival and site are further developed and promoted for more tourists.

Lastly, based on the empirical findings of this mixed methods research and existing literature, a new conceptual framework was developed consisting of seven layers: context, commoditisation, religion, *actual Festival product*, *augmented nature of the religious experiences*, *authentic nature of the religious experiences* and *core religious experiences* and benefits. The conceptual framework

provides comprehensive and detailed sets of factors framed in it that could be applied by other scholars in their future studies on the perceived impacts of commoditisation on the nature of religious experiences in other countries within the context of religious festivals, sacred sites and pilgrimages.

The subsequent concluding chapter, *Chapter 9*, will relate how the objectives of the Thesis were met, set out the contribution to knowledge and practice, the limitations and the potential future areas of research.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 9 is the concluding chapter of this Thesis. It consists of five sections. The next section, Section 9.2 sets out the existing gaps in the literature at the outset of the research. This is followed by Section 9.3 which reviews the five research objectives formulated in this study. Next, Section 9.4 demonstrates how the empirical findings of this Thesis contributed to knowledge and practice. Last, the limitations and the potential future areas of research are outlined in Section 9.5.

9.2 THE RESEARCH GAPS

There is a variety of festival typologies within the event and tourism literature, one of which involves a pilgrimage to a holy site (Getz and Page 2016). Even though festival/event research has burgeoned over the last three decades (Getz 2007; Wilson et al. 2017; Backman 2018), several scholars consider that festival/event experiences have received little attention and need to be interrogated in greater depth (Getz 2008; Wilson et al. 2017; Backman 2018), in particular the experiences sought by attendees (Backman 2018). This gap is particularly true when it comes to the understanding of the nature of the experiences offered by Hindu religious festivals. There is a plethora of studies on visitors, and religious tourism, and their experiences at religious festivals and pilgrimages and at sacred sites in non-Hindu societies, in particular centred on the Christian denominations (Nolan and Nolan 1989; Collins-Krenier and Klot 2000; Olsen 2006; Ron 2009; Terzidou et al. 2017). Whilst Indian and non-Indian scholars have written on diverse Hindu festivals and pilgrimages and their sites in India from a wide range of perspectives and disciplines (Bhardwaj 1983; Shackley 2001; Kulkarni and Dhavalker 2005; Singh 2006; Shinde 2007; Ruback et al. 2008; Lochtefeld 2010; Buzinde et al. 2014; Shinde 2015), the existing literature is still open to more research on the experience sought and gained by the local adherents of the Hindu religion. This religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri research has addressed that gap by advancing our understanding of the nature of the religious experiences offered by a Hindu religious festival, embodying a pilgrimage, for those attending it, on the island of Mauritius. It also complements this gap by investigating how the development and promotion of the Festival and its site to attract tourists (commoditisation) may impact on the authenticity of the Hindu participants' religious experiences.

9.3 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Using a mixed methods approach, this study aimed *to critically evaluate the nature of the religious experiences offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri to the Mauritian*

Hindu participants and their perceptions of the possible impacts on these religious experiences resulting from any future commoditisation of the Festival and its site. To address this overall aim, the study formulated five objectives. This section will show how the following research objectives were met in this study.

- 1. To critically review academic literature in order to identify key factors that may potentially influence the nature of the religious experiences for a religious festival, pilgrimage and at a sacred site. The review, covering the nature of the experiences, authenticity and commoditisation, is to act as a guide to the primary research and the subsequent interpretation of the findings.***

This first objective was addressed by undertaking a critical literature analysis (see *Chapter 2*) which helped in identifying gaps and opportunities as illustrated in Section 9.2. The review of existing/previous studies and research provided comprehensive insights that underpinned the current research investigation in regard to its context and content. In doing so, a number of key factors were identified as influencing and contributing to the religious experiences generated from religious festivals, pilgrimages and at sacred sites. Additionally, other key research areas and associated factors were examined relating to the authenticity of experiences and the positive and negative impacts of commoditisation on experiences. These helped to better understand the content of the study. These factors were conceptualised in an initial conceptual framework (see Figure 2.2).

Additionally, the literature review helped in identifying a good theoretical underpinning for the study of the religious experiences offered by the Festival that was guided/framed by adopting Levitt's (1981) model, and Kotler's (1994) conceptualisation of the product levels (see Figure 2.3). This framework guided the foci of the research and set out how the conceptualisation was translated into practice through a mixed methods study as detailed in *Chapter 3*. On the one hand, a qualitative approach, using semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews, was undertaken with the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) and the relevant 'Public Sector' organisations (PS) to explore the nature of the religious experiences and the commoditisation process. On the other hand, a quantitative survey was used to understand the behaviours, attitudes and characteristics of the participants who attended the Festival. In doing so, the activities performed and the associated religious experiences of the participants in the four components of the Festival (the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja) and their attitudes towards the authentic character of the Festival and site and the potential implications of commoditisation were examined.

- 2. To identify and explore the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities as to what they perceive to constitute and influence the religious experiences and the authenticity sought by the Mauritian Hindu participants from the Festival.***

The second objective was achieved by using qualitative interviews with the eight representatives of the RAs. The perceived nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival to the local Hindu participants was explored in *Chapter 4*. Following the three layers of the total religious experiences of the Festival as in Figure 2.3, the RAs provided the views of their organisation on the overall core and augmented nature of the religious experiences as part of the *actual Festival product*. First, in regard to the overall *core religious experiences*, four themes emerged from the analyses of the RAs' interviews, namely 'closeness and connectedness to God', 'self-purification', 'self-transformation' and 'self-actualisation' (see Section 4.3). These four themes indicated that the Festival gave the participants the opportunity to move away from their daily routine life to gain pious-related experiences and benefits to satisfy their overall desired religious duties (*Dharma*) and obligations. Second, the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* arose as a result of the settings in which the participants find themselves: the (1) religious, (2) physical and (3) social settings (see Section 4.4). All three settings were essential in augmenting the religious experiences offerings for the Festival. In fact, these acted as catalysts raising the level of the experience beyond that which could be experienced at other times. From the RAs' perspectives, three religious setting constituents ('deep involvement in the prayers', 'making a personal sacrifice' and 'freed from social barriers'), three physical setting constituents ('festival settings', 'atmosphere' and 'place dependence and attachment') and four social setting constituents ('dynamic and active participation', 'social learning', 'social flow' and 'facilitators of social engagement') enhanced the participants' religious experiences for the Festival.

The second objective also encompassed the perceived nature of the authenticity sought by the Mauritian Hindu participants from the viewpoint of the RAs (see Section 6.2). This was covered in *Chapter 6* of this Thesis. The three themes that emerged from the analyses of the RAs' interviews were (1) 'authentic' religious experiences, (2) 'authentic' physical experiences and (3) 'authentic' social experiences. The RAs identified one constituent, 'undertaking devotional practices' shaping the 'authentic' religious experiences. Regarding the 'authentic' physical experiences, the RAs identified two constituents, namely the (1) atmosphere and (2) place dependence and attachment. Lastly, three constituents arose from 'authentic' social experiences: the 'dynamic and active participation', 'facilitating participants' participation' and 'Hindu identity'. These three themes and associated constituents helped in understanding what experiences at the Festival are characterised as authentic and what should be preserved in these components of the Festival if the Festival and site are further commoditised.

3. *To identify and explore the views of Mauritian Hindus who had participated in the Festival as to what constitutes and influences their religious experiences and the authenticity of those experiences arising from their participation in the Festival.*

The third objective was met by undertaking quantitative research with the local Hindu participants who had participated in the Festival. This objective was achieved by examining (a) the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival for the local Hindu participants (see *Chapter 5*) and (b) which features of the Festival were perceived as important in bringing about the authentic character of the Festival for the participants (see Section 7.2). Whilst the qualitative findings with the RAs, investigated as part of the second objective, provided broader perspectives of what these organisations considered the participants sought from their involvement in the Festival, the results of the quantitative surveys in respect of the third objective helped in identifying specific elements that contributed to the participants' religious experiences and to the authenticity of their religious experiences. The subsequent three paragraphs will use the three layers of the total religious experiences for the Festival as in Figure 2.3 to show how (a) was achieved.

Section 5.4.2 established the participants' *core religious experiences*. From Table 5.40, the participants who attended the Festival rated eight personal religious outcomes ('attained personal salvation', 'made a personal sacrifice', 'increased my self-knowledge', 'renewed spiritually', 'experienced self-renewal', 'been purified', 're-affirmed my faith and belief', 'found meaning in my life' and 'gone through hardship for my faith') as 'quite a bit', indicated by an overall median value of 4.00, denoting relatively strong personal feelings associated to these personal religious outcomes, while the remaining two ('found meaning in my life' and 'gone through hardship for my faith') 'moderately' matched their personal feelings about participation in the Festival, seen through an overall median value of 3.00. The evaluation of the participants' existential feelings assisted in identifying the core religious benefits gained through their participation in the Festival to fulfil their religious obligations and goals. These findings were discussed in detailed in Section 8.2.2.3.

In each of the four components of the *actual Festival product*, the proportion of participants who participated in the 'common' (activities carried out in all four components) and 'contextual' religious activities (activities that were 'contextual', in other words not carried out in each of the four components of the Festival as they took place in different environments/settings) and the importance they attached to these activities in contributing to their religious experiences, were examined. First, the participants were given a list of activities in each of the four components of the Festival and were asked whether or not they undertook each of those activities (see Section 5.3). The activities which the participants undertook during the Festival indicated how they practised their belief during the Festival in terms of the percentage of participants who participated. A hierarchy of activities was determined based upon the percentage of those who participated (see Sections 5.3.2.1, 5.3.3.1, 5.3.4.1, 5.3.5.1). Second, from the point of view of the participants, the level of importance of the contribution of each of the activities to their religious experiences in the four components of the Festival was measured through a four-point Likert item rating scale with the options '1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Less Important, 4=Not Important'. The results showed that participants considered performing established religious behaviours (for example fasting, praying or carrying out rituals and other contextual religious activities, such as buying religious

items during the preparation component, making offerings and collecting the sacred water as part of their visit to the sacred lake, amongst others) to be very important to their religious experiences (see Section 8.2.3.4). The research findings also indicated that the activities, being carried out by the highest proportions of participants during the preparation, the visit to the site and the Char Pahar ki Pooja, see Table 8.1, were also very important activities in contributing to their religious experiences, see Table 8.2. However, for the journey to and from Ganga Talao, while the highest proportion of participants undertook the activities ‘carry religious (Pooja) items’ and ‘call out God’s name’, they indicated that these contextual religious activities were important rather than very important contributors to their religious experiences. What was very important to their religious experiences was to follow established religious behaviours and to experience the sacred atmosphere or environment.

The results of the quantitative surveys showed that both the physical and social settings contributed to the *augmented nature of the religious experiences*. As part of the physical settings, the local Hindu participants acknowledged that ‘experiencing the sacred atmosphere’ during the journey to and from Ganga Talao component (see Section 5.3.3.3) and ‘the sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, incense sticks burning)’ and ‘the sacred environment (e.g. the temples, the sacred water, cool temperature)’ during the visit at Ganga Talao component were very important to their religious experience (see Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4). Within the social settings, participants evaluated the personal ‘social’ opportunities generated by their participation in the Festival to be either ‘Important’ or ‘Very important’ (see Section 5.4.4). The opportunity to be together with family and/or friends was acknowledged to be very important for the participants.

The third objective also encompassed determining which features of the Festival were perceived by the participants as important in bringing about the authentic character of the Festival (see Section 7.2). A list of fifteen statements were given to the participants asking them how important each was in contributing to their view of the authentic character of the Festival. A four-point Likert item rating scale was used with ‘1=Very Important, 2=Important, 3=Less Important and 4=Not Important’. The quantitative findings revealed that participants rated six activities as being ‘Very important’ (‘fasting in preparation for, and during, the period of the Festival’, ‘making an offering at the lakeside’, ‘collecting the sacred water from the lake’, ‘pouring the sacred water on the Shivling for the Char Pahar ki Pooja’, ‘actively participating in the Char Pahar Ki Pooja (e.g. making offerings to the Shivling)’ and ‘the sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, camphor and incense burning) at Ganga Talao’), eight statements as being ‘Important’ (‘being close to the 108 feet Lord Shiva statue (Mangal Mahadev) at Ganga Talao’, ‘experiencing self-penance during the journey due to the fatigue and hardship involved’, ‘visiting other temples during the journey’, ‘following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying) at Ganga Talao’, ‘the wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes during the journey’, ‘the natural environment (e.g. landscape) around Ganga Talao’, ‘the hospitality of other Hindus who provided free food and drink, toilets and bathing facilities during the journey’ and ‘having a collective experience with other Hindus at

Ganga Talao') and one activity as being 'Less important' ('carrying a Kanwar during the journey'). Essentially, all these suggest that, from the perspective of the participants, these activities have to be preserved as they are if the Festival and its site are further commoditised.

4. To determine the views of the Mauritian Religious Authorities, the 'Public Sector' organisations and the Mauritian Hindus who had attended the festival on the potential commoditisation of the Festival and its site (by using the Festival and its site to increase the number of tourists visiting Mauritius) and the potential impacts on the religious experiences of Mauritian Hindus participating in the Festival and its site.

The fourth objective was accomplished by examining the perceived possible impacts of any future commoditisation resulting from an increase in the number of tourists attending the Festival and its site. This objective was studied from the perspectives of the three sets of stakeholders (the RAs, the 'Public Sector' organisations (PS) and the local Hindu participants). In order to explore this objective, qualitative interviews were undertaken with the representatives of the RAs and PS (see Section 6.3) while quantitative surveys were used with the local Hindu participants who participated in the Festival (see Section 7.3). The views of the three sets of stakeholders were discussed in Section 8.3.3. The third objective helped in developing our understanding on the 'overall' perspectives of the three sets of stakeholders on the possible impacts of promoting and developing the Festival and its site for more tourists. It also helped in identifying the perceived outcomes of an increased number of tourists on the authentic nature of the religious experiences at the Festival and its site and the perceived possible outcomes/broader impacts that may result from the development of the Festival. Overall, the findings showed that the three sets of stakeholders supported the idea of the commoditisation of the Festival and site in that they did not object to an increased number of tourists. Generally, it was argued that this is because the Hindu religion welcomes everyone, and that people coming would in fact benefit from understanding the religion. Despite this positive take on welcoming the tourists, the stakeholders shared the view that tourists not of the Hindu faith should adhere to certain behaviours, for instance they should dress properly and be respectful at the sacred site, as would a Hindu participant, and by observing these behaviours their presence would not undermine the religious nature and authenticity of the Festival.

5. To undertake a critical evaluation synthesising the literature and the qualitative and quantitative research findings to underpin a conceptual framework that furthers our understanding of the perceived effects of commoditisation on the core, augmented and authenticity of the religious experiences.

The last objective of this Thesis was met by developing a conceptual framework that integrated both the qualitative and quantitative findings of this study with the literature (see Section 8.4). The framework shows that religion was an internal force which was studied in this research through the

use of Smart's (1996, 1998) seven dimensions. The followers of a religion share a set of unique beliefs, doctrines, religious/ethical teachings, practices and behaviours. If commoditisation, the external force illustrated in Figure 8.5, takes place, it is likely to have an impact on the *authentic nature of the religious experiences* for the participants. A number of factors could account for this, for instance making the Festival a 'spectacle' and the ethical behaviour of tourists. It is also likely that commoditisation would have a 'ripple' effect on the *core religious experiences* gained by participants during the journey to and from Ganga Talao component and the visit at Ganga Talao component.

9.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

By achieving each of the five objectives of this Thesis (see Section 9.3) and by critically reviewing and discussing the research findings from the three sets of stakeholders in the light of previous theories, research and practices from the existing literature (see *Chapter 8*), this research has identified and helped to fill the research gaps in existing literature. This section sets out the main contributions of this research into the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri research.

9.4.1 Academic contributions

First, this research has adopted a marketing approach, based on Levitt's (1981) typology and Kotler's (1994) conceptualisation of product levels, to critically explore the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival for the local Hindu participants. This novel approach is one of the main contributions of this study in that it advances our knowledge and understanding of the religious experiences sought and gained by Mauritian Hindus during the Festival. Previous studies on festival experiences have adopted Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience economy framework and Kapferer's (1998) prism of brand identity. Both of these were rejected and considered inappropriate for the current study on the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri because of the religious nature of the festival, the context would not fit within these models. As a result, the current research has considered the Festival as an experiential product made up of the *core religious experiences*, the *actual Festival product* and the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* (see Figure 2.3). Building on these three levels of religious experiences, this approach was seen as a good theoretical underpinning for the study of the 'experience' in religious and pilgrimage studies; in the present context in regard to the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri. Furthermore, as highlighted in Section 2.6.5, the marketing view of experiences and products is considered acceptable and is used by several scholars in the tourism field (Middleton 1988; Swarbrooke 1995; Saraniemi and Kylanen 2011; Mehmetoglu and Normann 2013; Byrd et al. 2016). This is no exception in this study which furthers existing religious festival and pilgrimage literature through its use and applied context in this research.

Second, a holistic model (see Figure 8.3) was developed to capture the ‘entire’ religious experience offerings of the Festival for the participants as part of the *actual Festival product*, which embodied the four components: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja. This has extended Shackley’s (2001) model to improve understanding of the religious experiences offered by the Festival for the participants. Essentially, this study has altered the traditional linear model of pre-experience, on-site experience and evaluating the overall experiences in that it added the prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja component in the model to fit the research context and content. After the participants returned to their usual home settings, they undertook these prayers for the Festival. Therefore, the holistic model developed as part of the *actual Festival product* shows a chronological passage of time and devotional practices starting from the preparation for the Festival to the Char Pahar ki Pooja. This research paid particular attention to the activities and rites the participants performed, and the level of importance attached to the activities and rites in contributing to their religious experiences, in each of the four components of the Festival. Also, an overall evaluation of the participants’ experiences after the conclusion of the Char Pahar ki Pooja component was incorporated. Therefore, this holistic model, built on Shackley’s model (2001), can be used to explore behaviours and the importance of participants’ experiences in future studies.

Third, this research has used and applied two conceptual frameworks (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3) guiding and informing the main data collection in order to meet the overall purpose of this religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri study. On the one hand, an initial conceptual framework consisting of factors derived and conceptualised from a critical literature analysis assisted the researcher in exploring factors influencing the complex nature of experiences (Figure 2.2). This framework also included factors encompassing the authenticity of experience and the commoditisation of the experience. On the other hand, Figure 2.3 guided the overall foci of the research. This framework was developed on Levitt’s (1981) model and Kotler’s (1994) conceptualisation of the product levels. Both these frameworks set out how the conceptualisation was translated into practice by using qualitative and quantitative approach. These frameworks are initial bases that could be used to guide future studies.

Fourth, the empirical findings of this research were integrated with the literature to develop a new conceptual framework (see Figure 8.5) that furthered our understanding of (a) religious experiences and how they were derived and structured and evaluated by the local Hindu participants and the Mauritian Religious Authorities involved with the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri and (b) the perceived effects of commoditisation on the nature of the religious experiences offered by the Festival to the local Hindu participants (using the views of the local Hindu residents, RAs and PS). This conceptualisation consisted of a seven layered framework which included consideration of the political, economic and social contexts, commoditisation, religion, *actual Festival product*, *augmented nature of the religious experiences*, *authentic nature of the religious experiences* and *core religious experiences* and benefits. The conceptual framework

developed provides a comprehensive and detailed set of factors framed within it. As such, this framework, consisting of different layers of conceptualisations, could be applied by other scholars in their future studies on the perceived impacts of commoditisation on the nature of religious experiences in other countries within the context of religious festivals, sacred sites and pilgrimages.

Lastly, this Thesis contributes to the methodology in that a mixed methods approach was adopted. Several reasons were provided in Section 3.4.2.2 for choosing mixed methods in this study. Throughout the discussion in *Chapter 8*, it was found that whilst the qualitative findings revealed broader themes for a specific topic, the quantitative findings identified specific elements that reinforced the qualitative results. This shows that the strengths and limitations of mixing or combining the qualitative and quantitative approaches had strengthened the research outcomes by providing a more detailed understanding of the research topics. Thus, using mixed methods in this Thesis has generated rich explanatory qualitative data/findings and more generalisable quantitative data/results on the phenomenon under investigation. Additionally, using mixed methods enhances the validity of inferences in the research through the triangulation process (Saunders et al. 2007; Molina-Azorin and Font 2016). For instance, in the current research, the views of the three stakeholders on the implications of commoditisation for the religious experiences, gathered through qualitative and quantitative methods, were discussed/triangulated in the light of the literature, thus enhancing the credibility of the research (Saunders et al. 2012) and validating the research (Sedmak and Longhurst 2010).

9.4.2 Knowledge contributions

This Thesis has contributed to knowledge in different ways by adding new data and/or confirming that the results match to the literature. This sub-section will give a broad perspective of the main contributions to knowledge in terms of (1) the level of religious experiences, (2) the authenticity of religious experiences and (3) the perceived effects of commoditisation on those experiences. As these contributions were critically evaluated in *Chapter 8*, the current section will briefly indicate these key contributions.

9.4.2.1 The level of religious experiences

The Festival, as an experiential product, is composed of the *core religious experiences*, the *actual Festival product* and the *augmented nature of the religious experiences* (see Section 9.4.1). This proposed division of religious experiences offered by the Festival is new to the religious tourism and pilgrimage literature. Each of these three layers is reviewed as follows:

- *The core religious experiences are the main religious benefits/outcomes the local Hindu participants gain/seek to gain through their participation in the Festival.*

All the findings provided in this part extend the literature. First, the findings of this Thesis revealed that participants believe they experience self-purification without the need to ‘take a dip’ in the sacred lake of Ganga Talao. This is an addition to the existing literature as Hindus normally take a dip as a core religious practice in sacred rivers of India for self-purification to absolve them from sins and connect them to God (Morinis 1992; Lochtefeld 2010; Jacobsen 2013; Buzinde et al. 2014; Hopkins et al. 2015; Griffin and Raj 2017). The research findings further the literature by identifying a number of devotional/religious practices performed by participants for the Festival that assisted them in experiencing self-purification through walking, fasting, observing celibacy, abstaining from smoking and drinking alcohol, and worshipping Shiva more frequently, amongst others. Second, the findings of this research demonstrated that experiencing self-transformation, which is traditionally gained by being purified, getting rid of daily crises and carrying out a pilgrimage and rituals (Sections 2.2.4.2, 2.2.5.1 and 8.2.2.2), could also be attained through new religious knowledge and values and the feeling of being uplifted. Third, as part of experiencing self-actualisation, it was found that by undertaking the prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja, the participants are put on the right path of attaining the four legitimate goals of a Hindu life relating to the concepts of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, which are deeply rooted in the Hindu mythology (see Sections 2.2.2.1 and 4.2.3). The importance of undertaking these prayers is an addition to the literature. In fact, evidence of the experiential power and benefits of performing rituals are scarce in the literature and demand further exploration. Fourth, the findings of this Thesis revealed that participants who walked or used transport gained similar self-actualisation benefits. This is because the ultimate goal of the participants was to collect the sacred water, pray with it and bring it home. In doing so, they were able to fulfil their religious obligations and duties.

- *The actual Festival is what the Festival is offering to the local Hindu participants that gives them the core religious experiences and it relates to the four components of the Festival: the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja.*

As discussed in Section 9.4.1, a holistic model (see Figure 8.3) was developed that captured the ‘entire’ religious experience offerings embedded in the *actual Festival product*. This was an extension of Shackley’s (2001) model. Using this model, the type of activities performed by the participants and the level of importance associated to these activities contributing to the religious experiences were explored in each of the four components of the Festival. Participants undertook both common and contextual activities that influenced their behaviours and religious experiences. The research findings showed that there was a divergence in the views of the RAs and the Hindu participants in respect of undertaking the prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja. According to the qualitative findings of the RAs, undertaking these prayers was very important for the Festival. However, the quantitative results indicated that only two thirds of the participants attended these prayers during their participation in the Festival. This implies that the remaining one third, who did not participate in these prayers, missed the opportunity to gain the ‘total’ religious experiences and

benefits offered by the Festival. In contrast, those participants who undertook the prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja had the opportunity to experience an existential sense of completeness, a higher purpose and a deeper meaning of spiritual life. As a result, they were able to find their inner self and experience both self-purification and self-transformation (see Section 8.2.2.2).

Another important contribution of this study is that there is a link between the proportion of participants who participated in the activities undertaken and the importance they attached to these activities in contributing to their religious experiences in three components (the preparation, the visit to the site and the Char Pahar ki Pooja). However, there is no such link between each of the ‘contextual’ activities - ‘carry religious (Pooja) items’ and ‘call out God’s name’ - and the level of importance the participants attached to these activities in contributing to their religious experiences during the journey to and from Ganga Talao component for (see Table 8.1). In fact, the participants scored these two contextual religious activities as the only ones being important to their religious experiences. Therefore, this finding shows that while participants may perform other activities, they do not attribute a high level of importance to these activities in contributing to their religious experiences.

Furthering the previous paragraph, this research on the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri has provided insights into the behaviours and religious experiences of males and females (of the Hindu faith). Both genders were equally likely to undertake same activities during the Festival and to give equal importance to activities in contributing to their religious experiences. This shows that males and females gave similar importance to the Festival, type of activities they carried out and religious experiences and benefits sought. However, there were few exceptions, for instance males considered carrying a Kanwar more authentic than females and the ambiance along the pilgrimage route to deteriorate with an increase in tourists. Even though there were differences, the effect size always was always weak.

- *The augmented nature of the religious experiences relates to what heightens the ‘normal’ or ‘mundane’ experiences of the local Hindu participants for the Festival.*

Within this layer, several key findings emerged that contributed to the literature. Overall, the religious, physical and social settings influenced the *augmented nature of religious experiences* for the Festival. The augmentation of the participants’ religious experiences arose in two of the four components (during the journey to and from Ganga Talao and the visit to Ganga Talao) as the participants gained novel experiences only when they left behind their mundane lives and spaces.

In regard to the physical settings augmenting the religious experiences, three elements made up the constituent ‘atmosphere’: soundscape, ambiance and climate. Whilst the findings on soundscape were in accordance with the literature, the findings on both ambiance and climate were new

additions (see Section 8.2.4.2.2). Ambiance was seen to affect the participants' behaviours, loyalty to, and attachment with the Festival as well as their identity. As for the climate, the literature supports that weather and climate can influence visitors' visit to the religious site (Nyaupane et al. 2015). The findings for this Thesis further this by indicating that both the natural environment of the site and the weather conditions have transformational benefits on the participants helping them to experience its sacredness.

In terms of the social settings, this research has shown that participation in the Festival is not restricted to local Hindus as Mauritian non-Hindus and Hindus from other parts of the world also participated, thereby adding to the Festival's social dynamics. This offered the local Hindu participants and foreign Hindus the opportunity to reinforce their (religious and social) identities and it helped the Mauritian Hindu and non-Hindu participants to build a shared social and community identity, reinforcing social relations, bolstering rapport and unifying them. This in turn fosters and promotes tolerance and social integration.

9.4.2.2 *The authenticity of religious experiences*

From the literature analysis, the concept of authenticity has been explored from the tourists' perspectives by many scholars (see Section 2.4.1). This Thesis has extended this exploration to include the lens of the local residents/adherents to understand the perceived authenticity of experiences within a religious festival and pilgrimage context. Furthermore, this study has explored the existential form of authenticity, derived from Wang's (1999) typology, which is based on personal feelings arising during activities. The study has shown that the religious, physical and social settings influence the perceived existential *authentic nature of the religious experiences*. The three themes that emerged are the 'authentic' religious experiences, 'authentic' physical experiences and 'authentic' social experiences.

In respect of the 'authentic' religious experiences, this Thesis found that the type of clothes worn by participants gave them the opportunity to be involved in 'self-making' (where an individual is being true to himself/herself or find himself/herself) connecting them to their religion, values, ideologies and identity. Self-making is also related to Wang's (1999) concept of intra-personal authenticity, which is associated with the opportunity to discovering one's self by being away from one's mundane life during a pilgrimage walk (see Section 2.4.2.4.1). In regard to the 'authentic' physical experiences, this study has contributed to knowledge in that specific determinants of the physical environment at Ganga Talao (the 'atmosphere' and the features causing the 'place dependence and attachment') were important to meet the needs of the participants so that they can undertake their pilgrimage and carry out rituals.

Furthering the knowledge contribution in terms of the 'authentic' social experiences, the findings identified that Hindu identity is enriched throughout the Festival and not only at the site or during

the pilgrimage. This is because the participants were likely to meet and undertake collective religious activities with other Hindus during the preparation and Char Pahar ki Pooja components. As a result, this strengthened their ties with others and helped them to experience inter-personal existential authenticity. Also, within the ‘authentic’ social experiences, this research has extended the study of Buzinde et al. (2014) in that volunteer and participants experience intra-personal authenticity as both feel equal, having left behind their social status (see Section 8.3.2.4.3). It was found that both volunteers and participants collectively enjoy pleasant and unique existential ‘authentic’ social experiences with heightened community spirit and identity.

9.4.2.3 The effects of commoditisation on the religious experiences

Whilst there were differences in views of the three stakeholders throughout the study, they shared similar views on the encouragement of tourists during the Festival. They unanimously agreed on the development of the Festival and its site for more tourists although they suggested some caveats (see Objective 4 in Section 9.3). The findings of this Thesis revealed that the Hindus in Mauritius are tolerant and they welcome anyone willing to participate in the Festival. Their tolerant nature is not only based on their belief systems but also on their inherent qualities of being a Mauritian. Other key findings were highlighted in Section 8.3.3.

9.4.3 Practical contributions

The findings of this Thesis have implications for the Mauritian Religious Authorities (RA) as well as the ‘Public Sector’ organisations (PS). The research provides invaluable insights into the nature of the religious experiences offered by the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri festival (Festival) for the Mauritian Hindu participants. In order to maintain these religious experiences, the sacredness of the site needs to be preserved during the Festival. The RAs already provide amenities, such as tents, toilet and bathroom facilities, which have seen to be important parts of the physical environment benefitting the participants. This Thesis proposes that there is a need to improve existing facilities, which will lead to a more positive evaluation of existential religious experiences and an overall perceived image of, and emotional attachment to, the site, in turn enhancing the quality of their religious experiences during the Festival. Existing facilities can also be improved by providing more cleaning staff and better facilities within tents to better accommodate the needs of participants and thereby helping with their flow along the pilgrimage route and at Ganga Talao. In doing so, the RAs will not only maintain the sacredness of the site but also help to meet the participants’ needs. Also, there is a need for the RAs to understand the Festival through the seven layers (see the conceptual framework in Section 8.4.1) so that whatever is provided, or done during the Festival, does not affect the religious experiences of participants and instead meet their expectations and maintain the success of the Festival.

In regard to Kanwar, the PS pointed that carrying the Kanwar, as part of making a personal sacrifice during the pilgrimage walk, was a unique feature of the Festival and it contributed to the existential authenticity of the participants' religious experiences. However, this activity was undertaken by only 15% of the participants (see Table 5.21 in Section 5.3.3). This issue can be addressed through the RAs by taking positive steps to get more participants involved in this activity, thereby helping to maintain this unique feature of the Festival which can potentially lead to the existential authenticity of the religious experiences for the participants. Promoting this activity will further the undertaking of a common activity for a shared goal with friends and family members; being together with family and/or friends was a very important social opportunity for those Hindus who participated in the Festival. Meeting the needs of the participants will also help to maintain the success of the Festival.

In the event that the Festival is further promoted, and that this results in an increased number of tourists, other considerations will have to be taken into account, for instance, the PS will have to provide better roads, parking and other infrastructure. Although all stakeholders (RAs, PS and local Hindus who participated in the Festival), did not object to further development, care must be given not to over develop the site as this could lead to loss of its religious values, meanings and authentic characters. PS will also need to manage congestion in a better way by reinforcing the Maha Shivaratri Task Force (to look after the wellbeing and security of pilgrims who walk), the police force (who are responsible to ensure that traffic runs smoothly) and public transports in the view of accommodating more participants and facilitating access for participants to and at the site. This will help to limit any negative impact on the participants' religious experiences during the Festival. Also, the PS may need to address the issue of behaviour of tourists by educating them as to the dos and don'ts at the site, for example not bringing/consuming non-vegetarian food at the site, not consuming alcoholic drinks, removing shoes in the temples, not using foul language, not wearing appropriate clothes and so on. As the PS is made up of Governmental bodies, this organisation can deal with this through the media during the Festival and/or brochures distributed to tourist guides or hotels that would have direct contact with tourists. As such the goals of commoditisation can be met, with limited impact on the religious experiences of the participants.

9.5 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri research focused on three sets of stakeholders. However, there are other potential stakeholders who have a connection with the Festival. For example, outbound tour operators in other countries, such as South African tour companies bring 'diaspora Hindu tourists' to participate in the Festival. In addition, there are Mauritian internal tour operators who not only provide services to tourists already on the island, but also organise and provide services to outbound tour operators from other countries. Exploring their perspectives on the Festival, and their roles in tourism development, would provide additional understanding of views on the reasons why tourists participate in the Festival and how they meet

the needs of tourists without damaging the Festival. Other stakeholders to consider are the Hindu diaspora from abroad who are taking part in the Festival.

Due to the mass participation of the local Hindu participants in the Festival, the Government plays a key role in ensuring the welfare of these participants throughout their liminal trip. In the current research, only three organisations from the PS were targeted (see Table 3.3). With the exception of the Maha Shivaratri Task Force, acting as a ‘facilitator’ between the Government authorities and the non-Governmental bodies, the remaining organisations were chosen from the Ministry of Tourism. In order to further the current research findings on the potential impacts of commoditising the Festival, key informants from the five Municipal city councils and seven Districts councils of the island of Mauritius could be considered (as defined as the Local Government Act 2011). These public entities could provide insights into what they do, and to what extent, to keep the areas of the procession clean, and whether they provide facilities and services to pilgrims who walk or otherwise. They can also propose what should be done to handle an increase number of tourists.

The quantitative approach looked at gender comparisons as the independent variable for the data analysis. However, there is more scope for future analysis of the existing data set in that the data collection included other socio demographic variables such as income, age, place of residence, caste and level of education. These analyses would provide new insights into similarities and differences in regard to the religious activities undertaken by different types of Hindu participants in the Festival and the importance they attached to each of the activities they undertake during the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri in each of the *actual Festival products* (the preparation, the journey to and from Ganga Talao, the visit to Ganga Talao and the Char Pahar ki Pooja). In terms of new research that could consider other variables, as a basis for the inferential analysis, to investigate the attitudes of those who work versus those who do not work in the tourism industry and acceptability of commoditisation of the Festival. Yet other research can explore the views of the non-Hindus and the tourists not of the Hindu faith who are participating in the Festival to investigate their motives, emotions and attitudes on the authenticity of the Festival and/or experiences.

9.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Chapter 9 has provided insights into how this Thesis has advanced our understanding on the nature of the religious experiences offered by a Hindu religious festival on the island of Mauritius, embodying a pilgrimage, for those attending it from the perspectives of different stakeholders. It has extended our understanding on the perceptions of the Hindu Mauritians towards tourism, and how further developing and promoting the Festival and its site, to attract tourists (commoditisation), may impact on the authenticity of the Hindu participants’ religious experiences. The research has taken a novel approach in the field of tourism, event and religious pilgrimage studies and extended knowledge on Hindu pilgrimages, which have previously been conducted mainly in India, beyond

its borders. This original contribution has yielded positive outcomes by adopting a marketing approach for the religious festival and pilgrimage of Maha Shivaratri. In doing so, it has also opened up other avenues which will be valuable for scholars, with an interest in religious tourism, to conduct further research.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STAGE ONE

A.1 CONSENT FORM

I am a doctorate student at Bournemouth University and I am currently undertaking a research with Mauritian expatriates living in the UK who attended the Maha Shivaratri festival at least once over the last 10 years. The rationale behind this interview is to understand your motivations, experiences and satisfaction as a participant during the festival. The research will also assess how you perceive tourism attending this religious festival and the effect of having more and more non-local participants at the sacred lake. You have been selected as a key informant so that you can share your feelings and experiences which you encountered during your visit to Mauritius during this festival.

I will use the current project to structure my doctorate thesis and it may also be used for other academic related purposes such as conferences and publication. All information would be confidential and anonymous. Are you happy with the fact that the conversation will be recorded? Also in some circumstances notes will be taken where necessary, is that ok with you?

6 Main Themes that will be covered in our conversation

1. Motivation
2. Festival
3. Pilgrimage
4. Physical Settings- Rituals and Sacred Water
5. Tourism and Commoditisation
6. Satisfaction

Thank you for your valuable time and in agreeing to help me with my research project.

A.2 EXAMPLE OF TOPICS EXPLORED

Initial Questions

- Can you tell me how many times you have attended the Maha Shivaratri festival over the last 10 years?
- When did you last attend the festival?

Motivation:

- Can you tell me why Hindus travel to Mauritius for the festival?
- Why do local Hindu residents participate in the festival?

Festival

- Can you tell me how do you celebrate the festival?

Pilgrimage Experiences on the last visit

- Can you tell me what you do before you leave for Grand Bassin?
- During your last visit, how did you travel to Grand-Bassin?
- How long did you spend at Grand-Bassin?
- Can you describe your feelings once you were at Grand-Bassin?
- Did you return home by the same means of transport or on foot? YES/NO

Physical Settings- Rituals and Sacred Water

- Can you tell me what Grand-Bassin means to you?
- What does the sacred water means to you?

Tourism and Commoditisation

- Tell me your opinion on tourism to Mauritius? (*positive/negative*)
- Can you tell me your opinion on tourism and Maha Shivaratri?
- Currently, some 400,000 pilgrims attend Grand-Bassin during the festival. The Mauritian Government is promoting Grand-Bassin and the festival to attract more tourists. If in the next 10 years this number is doubled, do you think this will affect the religious experiences of the Hindu participants? *Why do you think so?*
- Do you think the non-Hindu participants should be treated differently, such as paying an entry fees while getting into Grand-Bassin during the festival? *Any particular suggestion?*

Satisfaction

- Can you tell me what you felt by attending this festival?
- Can you tell me what you achieved by attending the festival?

APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR STAGE ONE

The key themes that emerged from the exploratory study are as follows:

B.1 PHYSICAL SETTINGS, RITUALS AND SACRED WATER

B.1.1 The meanings of Ganga Talao

- A place of worship for Hindus and it forms part of the culture;
- Festival or not - the expatriates visit the site;
- A quiet and peaceful place at which to pray and to forget all problems;
- Unique, well-maintained, remote and very beautiful place with a cool temperature;
- Links Mauritian Hindus to India;
- There is a religious presence.

B.1.2 Feelings when collecting water

- The water was seen to be purified and precious;
- Feel close to Lord Shiva;
- Carrying Lord Shiva when collecting the sacred water;
- Fulfilment of a vow;
- Water has multiple functions such as for protection, for curing purposes, for usage when dying, for luck during interviews and for blessings.

B.1.3 Performing rituals at Ganga Talao

- Interviewees felt happy, relaxed and different to see many Hindus performing rituals during the Festival;
- Feeling of peace;
- Feeling the presence of and closer to God;
- Presence of something supernatural and powerful that allows people to forget all problems;
- Sense God in heart, body and soul;
- Process of purification;
- An opportunity to pray, reflect or ask what they want to achieve;
- The practice of belief;

- Participants felt emotional, happy and relieved.

B.1.4 Feelings for carrying sacred water home

- An achievement, a feeling of happiness and a sense of pride to carry the water home;
- Carrying something very precious and powerful;
- As the main objective to take part in the Festival and therefore it was like fulfilling a duty.

B.2 TOURISM AND COMMODITISATION

- Majority of the interviewees considered that having non-Hindus at the sacred site would not affect the religious experience.
- Mixed responses were generated when respondents were asked about doubling the number of tourists (an extra 400,000) over the next 10 years. There were concerns about:
 1. size of the place being too small;
 2. the place being too crowded as this will influence the way one prays and the significance of the Festival;
 3. tourists not being welcomed by everyone;
 4. tourists taking up the space which will in turn change the attitudes towards tourists;
 5. the Festival being cheapened.
- Some recognised the economic benefits of tourism to the island with a need for proper infrastructure.

B.3 FEELINGS FOR TAKING PART IN THE FESTIVAL

The interviewees expressed their feelings for attending the Festival as:

- Making oneself complete, being a plus during the holiday, excited, lucky, very happy, satisfied, purified, a mental and physical happiness, peaceful and nostalgic.
- Regretting to have to leave the place; but showed an intention to attend it again.
- Sadden to return home but happy to receive blessings, being relaxed, having a sense of achievement and being proud.
- A means of re-affirmation of one's faith.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR STAGE TWO

C.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE MAURITIAN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES

I would like to ask you some questions about the role of your organisation.

1. Can you *briefly* tell me the *role and objectives* of your organisation?

I would like to ask about your organisation's involvement with the Maha Shivaratri festival and the sort of facilities/services your organisation provides to participants. I would also like to discuss those various factors that your organisation considers are important in contributing towards the religious experience the Maha Shivaratri festival offers to the Hindu pilgrims who participate.

1. What is your organisation's involvement with the Maha Shivaratri festival?
 - For how *many years* has your organisation been *actively involved* in the Maha Shivaratri festival?
 - How *long* before the festival *each year* does your organisation *starts planning* for this religious event?
 - Can you *briefly* tell me what sort of *services and facilities* your organisation provides for the festival to (1) *pilgrims* walking to and from Grand-Bassin (2) *participants* at Grand-Bassin?
 - In addition to *practical actions* covered in the earlier questions, *how* does your organisation religiously contribute to the festival?
 - What does your organisation *want to achieve* through its religious involvement(s) with the Maha Shivaratri festival?
2. What does your organisation consider as being *the religious significance (religious meanings)* of the Maha Shivaratri festival
 - i. For the *pilgrims*?
 - ii. For the *local Hindu community*?
3. What does your organisation consider to be the *core (most important) religious experiences* of the *pilgrims*, in each of the following stages:
 - i. The *preparation before* attending the festival?
 - ii. While *walking to and from* Grand-Bassin for the festival? *Are there religious experiences that are only available to those walking to and from the site and are therefore not available to those travelling to Grand Bassin by other means?*
 - iii. *At the sacred site* during the festival?
 - iv. During the *prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja*?
 - v. Overall
4. In the view of your organisation, how do the 'physical elements' (the *natural environment of the pilgrimage routes, the nature and quality of the built environment and facilities on the pilgrimage routes and the facilities and religious buildings at the sacred site*) influence the *religious experience* of those participating in the festival:
 - i. While *travelling by any means to and from the sacred site* for the festival?

- ii. Are there *particular physical elements* leading to *religious experiences* that are *restricted (available only)* to those *walking to and from* the site during the festival?
 - iii. *At the sacred site* during the festival?
 - iv. During the *prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja*?
5. In the view of your organisation, how important are the various *social factors* and conditions (interaction with others/social settings/communitas) that characterise the festival in influencing the *religious experience* of Mauritian Hindu's participating in the festival? Can you please give me some examples of these social *factors*:
 - i. For the *preparation* before attending the festival?
 - ii. While *travelling to and from* the sacred site **by foot** for the festival?
 - iii. *Travelling by other means* to and from the site for the festival?
 - iv. *At the sacred site* during the festival?
 - v. During the *prayers of the Char Pahar ki Pooja*?
 6. What does your organisation consider to be the *augmented experience (cumulative/additional)* for participants in terms of what the festival offers that *cannot be experienced/gained* through the observance of *normal everyday religious practices*?
 7. Which of
 - (a) the *authentic features (quality) and characteristics (types)* of the MS festival and its site
 - (b) the associated *authentic religious experience* of the festival
 if lost or changed significantly, would have a *significant detrimental (negative) impact* on the *religious experience* for *pilgrims* and for the *local Hindu community*?

I would like to ask you some questions about the agreement signed by the Council of Religions and the MTPA.

1. In 2011, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the MTPA and the Council of Religions to promote cultural and spiritual tourism.
 - Are you aware of this agreement? *If yes*,
 - What does this agreement *mean for the local Hindu residents*?
 - In what *ways* has this agreement *benefitted* (1) your organisation (2) Temples at Grand-Bassin (3) Hindu residents (4) the Maha Shivaratri Festival?
2. Do any *aspects* of the *Memorandum of Understandings* refer specifically to the involvement of your organisation with the Maha Shivaratri festival? If so, could you please tell me what these are?

I would like to ask your organisation's point of view on tourists and their impacts on the site (Grand-Bassin) and for the Maha Shivaratri Festival.

1. What is the view of your organisation on the encouragement of *tourists of non-Hindu faith* by tour operators and the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure to attend the Maha Shivaratri festival? What are the reasons for this view?
2. If the festival was *to be actively promoted to tourists*, resulting in significantly more tourists (of non-Hindu faith) being present along the routes and at the sacred site of Grand-Bassin, what does your organisation consider will *be the impacts* upon:
 - i. The *core religious experience* for participants?
 - ii. The *experience for participants* in terms of the '*physical elements*' (nature and quality of the natural and the built environment)?

- iii. The *social factors* of the festival?
 - iv. The *augmented (cumulative/additional) experience* for participants?
 - v. The *authentic features and characteristics* of the festival and its site?
 - vi. The overall *authentic religious experience* of the festival?
3. A *Code of Ethics* has been developed for tourists, the tourism industry, and Mauritians; Are you familiar with it? Does it relate to the Maha Shivaratri festival?
- *If it does* could you explain these ethical concerns to me?
 - *If it does not relate*, would your organisation propose to implement a specific Code of Ethics for religious festivals such as the Maha Shivaratri? *If so what would be the organisation's primary ethical concerns?*

Finally I would like to ask you about your organisation's point of view on the broader impacts from the development of the festival on the local Hindu residents.

1. Does your organisation perceive that an *increase in the number of tourists* attending the festival would
- (a) *economically benefit*
 - (1) non-Hindu residents? If so, how?
 - (2) Hindu residents? If so, how?
 - (3) Hindu socio-cultural groups? If so, how?
 - (b) *socially benefit*
 - (1) non-Hindu residents? If so, how?
 - (2) Hindu residents? If so, how?
 - (3) Hindu socio-cultural groups? If so, how?
 - (c) *environmentally benefit*
 - (1) non-Hindu residents? If so, how?
 - (2) Hindu residents? If so, how?
 - (3) Hindu socio-cultural groups? If so, how?
2. Does your organisation have views *as to what changes would be acceptable* for the festival given that *while* there may be *benefits* there may *also be undesirable consequences from an increase in the number of tourists?*
3. If *there is an increase number of a tourist* during the festival, should *tourists of non-Hindu faith* be treated differently (e.g. pay entry fees/ different entry point)? If yes, any suggestions as to how this might be implemented / managed?
4. Does your organisation expect *any tensions (conflicts)* to arise between the *local Hindu residents and tourists* if there is a significant increase in the number of tourists at the Maha Shivaratri festival?
- What does your organisation anticipate may be the cause of such tensions?
 - If any tensions/ conflicts arise, how should these be dealt with?
 - Who should be *responsible* for responding to *any undesirable behaviour by tourists and/or locals* attending the festival?

C.2 INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH THE MAHA SHIVARATRI TASK FORCE

I would like to know more about the role of the Task-Force for the Maha Shivaratri festival.

1. Can you briefly tell me the role and objectives of the Task-Force for the Maha Shivaratri festival?
2. Who are involved in the Task-Force?

I would like to ask about the Task-Force's involvement for the Maha Shivaratri festival and the sort of facilities/services your committee provides to participants. I would also like to discuss those various factors that the Task-Force considers are important in contributing towards the religious experience the Maha Shivaratri festival offers to the Hindu pilgrims who participate.

1. Can you *briefly* tell me what sort of *services and facilities* the Task-Force provides for the festival to (1) *pilgrims* walking to and from Grand-Bassin (2) *participants* at Grand-Bassin?
2. In addition to *practical actions* covered in the earlier questions, does the Task-Force *contribute religiously* to the festival? If so, can you please elaborate on it?
3. What does is the Task-Force *want to achieve* through its religious involvement(s) with the Maha Shivaratri festival?
4. Which of
 - (a) the *authentic features (quality) and characteristics (types)* of the MS festival and its site
 - (b) the associated *authentic religious experience* of the festival*if lost or changed significantly*, would have a *significant detrimental (negative) impact* on the *religious experience* for *pilgrims* and for the *local Hindu community*?

I would like to ask you some questions about the agreement signed by the Council of Religions and the MTPA.

1. In 2011, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the MTPA and the Council of Religions to promote cultural and spiritual tourism.
 - Are you aware of this agreement? *If yes*,
 - What does this agreement *mean for the local Hindu residents*?
 - In what *ways* has this agreement *benefitted* (1) Temples at Grand-Bassin (2) Hindu residents (4) the Maha Shivaratri Festival?
2. Do any *aspects* of the *Memorandum of Understandings* refer specifically to the involvement of is the Task-Force with the Maha Shivaratri festival? If so, could you please tell me what these are?

I would like to ask the Task-Force's point of view on tourists and their impacts on the site (Grand-Bassin) and for the Maha Shivaratri Festival.

1. What is the view of the Task-Force on the encouragement of *tourists of non-Hindu faith* by tour operators, the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure and the Hindu House to attend the Maha Shivaratri festival? What are the reasons for this view?

2. If the festival was *to be actively promoted to tourists*, resulting in significantly more tourists (of non-Hindu faith) being present along the routes and at the sacred site of Grand-Bassin, what does the Task-Force consider will *be the impacts* upon:
 - The *authentic features and characteristics* of the festival and its site?
 - The overall *authentic religious experience* of the festival?
3. A *Code of Ethics* has been developed for tourists, the tourism industry, and Mauritians; Are you familiar with it? Does it relate to the Maha Shivaratri festival?
 - *If it does* could you explain these ethical concerns to me?
 - *If it does not relate*, would the Task-Force propose to implement a specific Code of Ethics for religious festivals such as the Maha Shivaratri? *If so what would be the Task-Force's primary ethical concerns?*

Finally I would like to ask you about the Task-Force's point of view on the broader impacts from the development of the festival on the local Hindu residents.

1. Does the Task-Force have views *as to what changes would be acceptable* for the festival given that *while* there may be *benefits* there may *also be undesirable consequences from an increase in the number of tourists?*
2. If *there is an increase number of a tourist* during the festival, should *tourists of non-Hindu faith* be treated differently (e.g. pay entry fees/ different entry point)? If yes, any suggestions as to how this might be implemented / managed?
3. Does the Task-Force expect *any tensions (conflicts)* to arise between the *local Hindu residents and tourists* if there is a significant increase in the number of tourists at the Maha Shivaratri festival?
 - What does the Task-Force anticipate may be the cause of such tensions?
 - If any tensions/ conflicts arise, how should these be dealt with?
4. Who should be *responsible* for responding to *any undesirable behaviour by tourists and/or locals* attending the festival?

Are there any other aspects of the Task-Force's involvement with the Maha Shivaratri festival and its site which we have not already discussed?

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM FOR STAGE TWO

Researcher : Yuvraj Vikram Singh Bheekie
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: Dr Neelu Seetaram (NSeetaram@bournemouth.ac.uk)
: Dr Jonathan Edwards (jonedwards@bournemouth.ac.uk)

Date: ...

Dear ...,

I am a doctoral researcher from Bournemouth University in the United Kingdom. I am currently conducting research on the Maha Shivaratri festival and the sacred site, Grand-Bassin. The research involves interviewing key informants from the Public Sector organisations and Religious Authorities as well as distributing questionnaires to local Hindu residents.

In this regard you have been selected as the highest ranked person who can answer on behalf of your association as to how your organisation is involved with the Maha Shivaratri festival and at Grand-Bassin. The rationale behind this interview is to provide an input into the understanding of the religious experience(s) provided by the festival for pilgrims and local Hindu. The interview will also help in understanding how the authenticity of the religious experience offered by the festival might be assured if the numbers of international tourists observing the festival was significantly increased.

The findings of my research will form my doctoral thesis and may also be used for other academic related purposes such as conferences and articles.

The following potential themes will be covered during our conversation: the role of your organisation, the experiences your organisation seek to provide; the view of your organisation as to the purposes of the religious festival and its site; the aim that your organisation seek to achieve from the festival; your organisation's point of view on tourism, its benefits and impacts on festival and its site.

Please read the table below carefully and delete as appropriate. If you need any clarification, please do not hesitate to ask.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information above. I have had the opportunity to ask for clarifications and have had these answered satisfactorily.	YES / NO
I agree that the conversation will be recorded and used solely for research purposes and that the recording will be destroyed one year after the completion of the research.	YES / NO
I agree that notes will be taken during the interview and will be used solely for research purposes and that these will be destroyed one year after the completion of the research.	YES / NO
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason and without there being any negative consequences. I also understand that if I do not wish to answer any particular question(s), I am free to decline.	YES / NO
I confirm that the procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me.	YES / NO
I give permission to the researcher to use my responses on behalf of my organisation. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials. The information I provide will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis, conferences, academic journals and any other related reports. Although my contributions are anonymous, I understand that as the name of my organisation may be used in report or reports, there is a possibility that I may be identified or become identifiable.	YES / NO
I agree to take part in the above-mentioned research project.	YES / NO

Participant:

Name (and/or) Signature

Date

Researcher:

Name and Signature

Date

Thank you for your valuable time in helping me with my research project.

Please note that: This signed and dated consent form is made in two originals, one of which will remain in the researcher's possession and the other will be handed to the participant.

APPENDIX E: EXTRACT OF INTERVIEW

What does your organisation consider as being the religious significance (religious meanings) of the Maha Shivaratri festival:

i. For the pilgrims?

People who learnt and studied religion can explain everything in detail, the meaning of Maha Shivaratri, what it brings, why we should pray. They explain everything, but for us (our organisation), we believe that work is worship, so our people, our friends who are there (at Ganga Talao), they spend most of the time serving, they say this is their prayer to offer some food to the pilgrims who have come tired and hungry. And the motto says service to man is service to god. Our guru said we see God in every human being, so this is our belief that we see God in every human being, we are serving one man, we are serving God. Human being is God for us. With this in mind, we offer our services.

ii. For the local Hindu community?

The local Hindu people, they are of two views. One group they don't go to pray idols and the other group they believe in idols. They are both Hindus, yet the Hindu religion is very vast like the ocean: we have Hindus who believe in God (they are Hindus), Hindus who do not believe in God (they are Hindus), Hindus who do several types of prayers (they pray several deities), Hindus who believe in and pray one deity (they are Hindus). Because it has been mentioned in Bhagwat Geeta, again I quote "that those who are atheist are also liked by God". God likes them, because they have their own perceptions, they have their own views of life; God helps them also. This is open...that it's open so vast. So those who believe in Lord Shiva, they go there, and they believe that Lord Shiva is the God who gives them power and energy to do everything and during the festival, they have their mindset as other religions they give some penance to themselves, self-penance. I do this, and it helps, it purifies the mind...they feel some compassion when they have done something wrong and it's a time for them to ask for forgiveness and to clear their minds and do good to people in future and to help people in the future and to do good for everyone. So, with these views if the people are going to Ganga Talao, they think like that, it is good for the country as a whole and Hindu religion believes in "Vasudevakutumbakam" meaning the world is one family. And with these values, they do their work and believe that world brotherhood will prevail, and world peace will prevail if everybody starts thinking like that and acting like that. So this is the place where you get peace of mind, you feel extremely happy, you feel peaceful and your troubles will go away because God will give you a solution, if you have some problems, you'll receive a solution because every problem has a solution... And you go there ... your own mind will create the solution with the help of God. You go to places such as this (Ganga Talao). And those who have not visited, I request them to go and visit it. It's a place worth visiting once in a lifetime...

APPENDIX F: THEMATIC ANALYSIS FOR THE THEME ‘AUTHENTIC’ PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES

Quotes from different organisations separated by ‘/’	Level 3 sub-categories	Level 2 sub-categories	Level 1 sub-categories	Main Category
We have to <u>preserve the climate</u> / you <u>won't be able to see fog</u> at Grand Bassin, it will <u>no longer be cold</u> in Grand Bassin. It will be hot at Grand Bassin and at times it will rain. And I think <u>to preserve the environment at Grand Bassin</u> , like it was 50 years ago/ you feel that you are in a <u>spiritual place</u> ; it is important to maintain its originality.	Climate (fog, rain, hot) and scenery	Naturescape and climate at Ganga Talao	Atmosphere (Physical Environment - intangible)	‘Authentic’ physical experience
Suppose where there is the temple, the divine song, the divine music, the vibration is different it gives you, it inclines you towards the all mighty. If in the same temple you put pop music, disco music, techno music, do you think people can do listen techno music, disco music and they are going to get godhood.	Type and importance of religious songs in temples	Soundscape in a temple		
we <u>impose a fee</u> for any car or bus entering /we start making <u>MS a commercials site</u> where <u>food are being sold to pilgrims/ the bazaar has been stopped</u> . We have to be very careful that it should not start ever again.. government should be very careful that such things should not be entertained to the detriment of the area, <u>to the atmosphere</u> , the <u>religious atmosphere</u> which prevails at Ganga Talao/ <u>keep this hidden spirituality</u> . This is very important/ Mostly its <u>serenity</u> . This <u>serenity</u> should not disappear. So the <u>purity existing</u> there should not disappear	Inauthentic quality of atmosphere	The detrimental effects on the quality of the atmosphere		
The main spiritual value at Ganga Talao is the lake, the <u>water</u> . You need the <u>water to pray</u> / The lake is the lake.. pilgrims are coming and for pilgrims... are giving that <u>spiritual connotation</u> , that <u>spiritual significance</u> of that lake.	Importance of the lake and water	The sacred water	Place dependence and attachment	
I don't want Grand Bassin to become <u>a lot of concrete everywhere</u> / We must think about the <u>setting of the site</u> / There should <u>not be too many concrete structures everywhere</u> which <u>will hide the environment</u> , that <u>it destroys it</u> ./So we have to be very very careful. So before the <u>authorities</u> give future <u>permits</u> , I think they should take these things into <u>consideration</u> /there is a need to warn the concerned the authorities. All future development should be in <u>the future setting</u> of... We have to take into consideration this environmental aspect, green planet and so on. <u>Sustainable development</u> is the word because I think we have signed an agreement somewhere with international agencies, so sustainable development has to be taken into consideration/ <u>parking slots are made</u> , <u>many trees are being cut</u> , and <u>nothing else is being planted</u> /	Adverse effect of physical development of the site and future attachment	The outcome of physical development making the place inauthentic		
So in the same way, it will have influence if the <u>authenticity of the lake is not preserved</u> , people <u>won't feel that attachment to that place</u> ...place has got a <u>symbolical attachment for any Hindus, not only Hindu, for anyone who has faith in Shiva</u> .	Ties with Ganga Talao	The attachment to the site		
<u>Infrastructures</u> have been put, it's for the <u>welfare of the pilgrims</u> , .../ So while putting that infrastructure, we have not distorted the configuration, .../ The lake is the lake, only we have put infrastructure for the betterment .../ <u>Whenever there is some development, some construction</u> , it has to be seen that it won't affect the area/ <u>trees are being cut, buildings are being constructed</u> /Some people are saying <u>we need to put aashram (spiritual retreat)</u> / We are also having a spiritual park where every year there will be some meditation.... I think for many years there has been people who went there with spiritual enthusiasm and the positive mindset is still there, so I don't think there will be any changes.	Physical amenities that are/will be provided for well-being of the participants	Physical development of the site		

APPENDIX G: APPROVAL OF ETHICS

F.1 STAGE ONE: EXPLORATORY RESEARCH



Research Ethics Checklist

About Your Checklist	
Reference Id	2105
Status	Approved
Date Approved	14/11/2013 17:49:26
Date Submitted	14/11/2013 15:56:40

Researcher Details	
Name	Yuvraj Bheekie
Faculty	School of Tourism
Status	Postgraduate Research (MRes, MPhil, PhD, DProf, EngD, EdD)
Course	Postgraduate Research - Tourism
Have you received external funding to support this research project?	No

F.2 STAGES TWO AND THREE: MAIN DATA COLLECTION



Research Ethics Checklist

About Your Checklist	
Reference Id	3878
Status	Approved
Date Approved	23/05/2014 10:04:00
Date Submitted	22/05/2014 07:18:48

Researcher Details	
Name	Yuvraj Bheekke
Faculty	School of Tourism
Status	Postgraduate Research (MRes, MPhil, PhD, DProf, EngD, EdD)
Course	Postgraduate Research - Tourism
Have you received external funding to support this research project?	No
Please list any persons or institutions that you will be conducting joint research with, both internal to BU as well as external collaborators.	N/A

APPENDIX H: SELF-COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE HINDU RESIDENTS



INFORMATION SHEET

Date: / /

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Yuvraj Bheekie and I am a doctoral researcher from Bournemouth University in the United Kingdom. I am currently conducting an academic study on the Maha Shivaratri Festival and the sacred site, Ganga Talao (Grand-Bassin).

I need your views on your religious experience of the festival and your opinions on the impacts of tourism on the site and the festival. Although you might not have attended this year's festival, your views are still valuable for my study.

The research involves interviewing the key informants from the Public Sector organisations and the Religious Authorities as well as distributing questionnaires to the local Hindu residents. The findings will help in understanding how to ensure the authenticity of the religious experience of the local residents while meeting the goals of potentially developing the Maha Shivaratri Festival and Ganga Talao for more tourists.

I would be grateful if you could get the questionnaire filled by someone who is over 18 years old, has attended the festival at least once in the last 10 years and whose birthday is next in the house.

For this study, your house has been selected on the basis of a random selection of your street. Your cooperation in filling the questionnaire will be very helpful and much appreciated. The questionnaire will take about 15-20 minutes to complete.

Your participation in the current study is voluntary. I can assure you that all information you provide will be confidential and anonymous.

I would highly appreciate if you can fill the questionnaire which will be collected in 2 days. If necessary, I can come back to collect the survey in another 2 days.

Thank you very much for your help and support.

Yours faithfully,

Yuvraj Bheekie
PhD Researcher
School of Tourism
Bournemouth University
Fern Barrow
BH12 5BB

MAHA SHIVARATRI FESTIVAL AND GANGA TALAO

1. Have you ever participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival?
(Put an 'X' in the appropriate box.) If 'Yes' go to Question 2. If 'No' go to Question 35. Yes ☐ No ☐
2. In how many years between 2010 and 2014 (including both 2010 and 2014) have you taken part in the Maha Shivaratri Festival?
(Put a number ranging from 0 to 5.)
3. In which year did you last participate in the Maha Shivaratri Festival?
4. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival what were the two most important reasons for you doing so? (Please put the two most important reasons for your participation in the Maha Shivaratri Festival in the spaces provided below.)
 1. _____
 2. _____
5. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, with whom did you go? (Put an 'X' in only one box below.)

a) I went alone.	
b) I went with friends (this includes neighbours or colleagues).	
c) I went as part of a couple (e.g. spouse or fiancé(e)).	
d) I went with family members only.	
e) I went with family members and friends.	

YOUR PREPARATION FOR THE MAHA SHIVARATRI FESTIVAL

6. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, how many days, in advance, did you start your preparations?
(Please put the total number of days in the box.)
7. As part of the preparation for the last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival did you:
(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

	Yes	No
a) fast (e.g. avoid eating meat products)?		
b) clean your house and yard thoroughly?		
c) build/help to build a Kanwar?		
d) buy religious (Pooja) items for prayers?		
e) listen to religious songs (e.g. on radio)?		
f) wear white clothes as a sign of purification?		
g) worship at your local temple more often than you normally would?		
h) make a donation to your temple or any other religious organisation for the Festival?		
i) carry out prayers that were specific to the Maha Shivaratri Festival?		
j) sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)?		
8. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, how important do you think each of the following were to your religious experience as part of your preparation?
(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Not Important	No View
a) Listening to religious songs (e.g. on radio).					
b) Maintaining your house and yard clean.					
c) Helping to build or building a Kanwar.					
d) Buying religious (Pooja) items.					
e) Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying, fasting).					
f) Wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes.					
g) Making one or more donations.					
h) Demonstrating the strength of your religious belief through your preparations.					
i) Performing special acts of worship that were additional to your usual religious activities.					
j) Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).					

YOUR JOURNEY TO AND FROM GANGA TALAO

9. When you last participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival from where (village/town) did you start your journey to Ganga Talao? _____
10. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, how did you travel to and return from Ganga Talao?
(Put an 'X' in one box for the journey to Ganga Talao and an 'X' in one box for the return journey.)
- | | Travel to Ganga Talao | Return from Ganga Talao |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| a) On foot? | | |
| b) Using transport (e.g. cycle, motorcycle, bus, car)? | | |
11. If you answered 'on foot' in Question 10, what was the main reason for you to walk?
(Put one reason only in the space provided below.)

12. If you answered 'using transport' in Question 10, what was the main reason for you not going 'on foot'?
(Put one reason only in the space provided below.)

13. How long did it take you to reach Ganga Talao? (Put the total time taken for you to reach Ganga Talao.) Days Hours
14. As part of your journey to and/or from Ganga Talao, the last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, did you:
(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)
- | | | Yes | No | |
|---|-----|-----|----|----|
| a) fast (e.g. avoid eating meat products)? | Yes | No | No | No |
| b) carry a Kanwar? | Yes | No | No | No |
| c) listen to religious songs (e.g. on radio)? | Yes | No | No | No |
| d) carry religious (Pooja) items? | Yes | No | No | No |
| e) wear white clothes as a sign of purification? | Yes | No | No | No |
| f) make a donation to one or more religious organisation(s)? | Yes | No | No | No |
| g) make use of the en-route facilities (e.g. free food and drink distribution)? | Yes | No | No | No |
| h) call out God's name (e.g. Bham Bham Bholey, Om Namah Shivaya)? | Yes | No | No | No |
| i) sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)? | Yes | No | No | No |
15. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, how important do you think each of the following were to your religious experience during your journey?
(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)
- | | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
|--|----------------|-----------|----------------|---------------|---------|
| a) Listening to religious songs (e.g. on radio). | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| b) Calling out God's name (e.g. Bham Bham Bholey). | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| c) Carrying a Kanwar. | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| d) Carrying religious (Pooja) items. | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| e) Following established religious behaviours (e.g. fasting). | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| f) Wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes. | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| g) Making one or more donations. | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| h) Making use of en-route services (e.g. free food and drink distribution). | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| i) Experiencing the sacred atmosphere. | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| j) Taking part in the pilgrimage (i.e. walk) which is different from the usual religious activities. | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| k) Visiting other temples en-route to Ganga Talao. | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
| l) Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans). | Very Important | Important | Less Important | Not Important | No View |
16. If you answered 'using transport' to travel to and/or from Ganga Talao in Question 10, what do you think would be the most important contribution that walking would have made to your religious experience that you missed out on?
(Put one reason only in the space provided below.)

YOUR VISIT TO GANGA TALAO

17. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, how long did you stay at Ganga Talao? Hours
(Put the total time you spent at Ganga Talao in the box provided.)

18. When you were at Ganga Talao, the last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, did you:
(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

a) fast?	Yes	No
b) pray with other devotees (e.g. performing 'Aarti' together with other devotees)?	Yes	No
c) wear white clothes as a sign of purification?	Yes	No
d) listen to religious songs (e.g. being played on the speaker)?	Yes	No
e) undertake personal prayer?	Yes	No
f) collect the sacred water from the lake?	Yes	No
g) make an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) at the lake?	Yes	No
h) attend worship in one of the temples at Ganga Talao?	Yes	No
i) offer Bel Patra to Lord Shiva in the temple?	Yes	No
j) receive any blessings from one of the Priests?	Yes	No
k) make a donation to the temple(s)?	Yes	No
l) attend cultural activities (e.g. religious songs, plays and speeches) at Ganga Talao?	Yes	No
m) purchase any items (e.g. religious books, statue of deities) at Ganga Talao?	Yes	No
n) sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)?	Yes	No

19. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, how important do you think each of the following were to your religious experience at Ganga Talao?
(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Not Important	No View
a) The sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, incense sticks burning).					
b) Making an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) at the lakeside.					
c) Collecting the sacred water from Ganga Talao.					
d) Getting close to the 108 feet Lord Shiva statue (Mangal Mahadev) at Ganga Talao.					
e) Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying, fasting).					
f) Praying together with other devotees.					
g) The sacred environment (e.g. the temples, the sacred water, cool temperature) at Ganga Talao.					
h) Wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes.					
i) Receiving blessings from the priest(s).					
j) Attending cultural activities (e.g. religious speeches).					
k) Experiencing the hospitality of other Hindus who provided free food and drink at Ganga Talao.					
l) Visiting different temples at Ganga Talao.					
m) Listening to religious songs.					
n) Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).					

THE CHAR PAHAR KI POOJA

20. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, did you attend the Char Pahar ki Pooja? (Put an 'X' in the appropriate box.) If 'Yes' go to Question 21 If 'No' go to Question 25. Yes No

21. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, where did you attend the Char Pahar ki Pooja on the night of the festival?
(Put an 'X' in only one box below.)

a) My Local Temple.	<input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>
b) At Ganga Talao.	<input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>
c) Other (please specify in the space provided):	<input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/>

22. The last time you participated in the Char Pahar ki Pooja, how many prayers did you attend?
(Put a number ranging from 1 to 4.)

23. When attending the Char Pahar ki Pooja the last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival did you:
(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

a) fast?	Yes	No
b) pray with other devotees (e.g. recite mantras together with other devotees)?	Yes	No
c) wear white clothes as a sign of purification?	Yes	No
d) listen to religious songs (e.g. being played on the speaker)?	Yes	No
e) undertake personal prayer?	Yes	No
f) pour the sacred water on the Shivling?	Yes	No
g) make an offering (e.g. using fruits, flowers) to the Shivling?	Yes	No
h) offer Bel Patra to Lord Shiva in the temple?	Yes	No
i) receive blessings from the Priest?	Yes	No
j) make a donation to the temple?	Yes	No
k) take part in the holy bath (bath the Shivling with yogurt, milk, etc.) of the Shivling?	Yes	No
l) sing religious songs (e.g. bhajans)?	Yes	No

24. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, how important do you think each of the following were to your religious experience during the Char Pahar ki Pooja:
(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Not Important	No View
a) The sacred atmosphere (bell ringing, incense sticks burning).					
b) Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying, fasting).					
c) Receiving blessings from the priest.					
d) Pouring the sacred water on the Shivling.					
e) Actively participating in the Char Pahar Ki Pooja (e.g. making offerings to the Shivling).					
f) Making a donation to the temple.					
g) Praying together with other devotees.					
h) Being involved in the holy bath of the Shivling.					
i) Listening to religious songs.					
j) Singing religious songs (e.g. bhajans).					

OVERALL EVALUATION OF PARTICIPATING IN THE MAHA SHIVARATRI FESTIVAL

25. Use each of the sets of words below to complete the sentence: "The last time I participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival I felt that I had...."

For each completed sentence write in the number, in the box next to each of the words, that most closely matches your personal feelings. Use the following numbers: (1) Not at all, (2) A little, (3) Moderately, (4) Quite a bit, (5) Entirely.

a) attained personal salvation (liberation).		i) a sense of community pride and spirit.	
b) attained self-fulfilment.		j) re-affirmed my faith and belief.	
c) increased my self-knowledge.		k) experienced self-renewal.	
d) renewed spiritually.		l) the opportunity to socialise.	
e) found meaning in my life.		m) been purified (through rituals).	
f) been freed from daily routine life/pressures).		n) bonded more with my family members and/or friends.	
g) made a personal sacrifice.		o) been freed from social barriers.	
h) gone through hardship for my faith.		p) confirmed my Hindu identity.	

26. The last time you participated in the Festival how would you describe your emotions?
(For each of the pairs of words, put an 'X' in the box that most closely matches how you felt as a participant in the Festival. The closer you put the 'X' to the description the more you think the description applies.)

a) I had a clear focus.		I had no clear focus.
b) I was excited.		I was bored.
c) I was proud to participate.		I was ashamed to participate.
d) I had a positive experience.		I had a negative experience.

e)	I felt relaxed.						I was stressed.
f)	I felt inspired.						I felt uninspired.
g)	I felt rewarded.						I felt disappointed.
h)	I felt refreshed.						I felt tired.
i)	I felt happy.						I felt sad.

27. How important were each of the following personal opportunities provided by your participation in the Festival? Please use the sets of words below to complete the sentence: "The last time I participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival I had the opportunity to"

(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Not Important	No View
a) meet and interact with other devotees/pilgrims.					
b) be together with my family and/or friends.					
c) interact with the priests (Pandits).					
d) share an equal social status with other devotees.					
e) express my Hindu culture and identity.					
f) be free from my daily routine life.					
g) perform special acts of worship.					
h) have a shared experience (e.g. praying with other devotees).					
i) move from the ordinary to the extraordinary in terms of my religious observance.					

28. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, how important were each of the following?

(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Not Important	No View
a) Having the time to reflect on my personal religious values and life.					
b) Having the time to better understand my inner self.					
c) Having the opportunity to strengthen my belief.					
d) Having the opportunity to focus and meditate on God(s).					
e) Having the opportunity to make donations.					
f) Undertaking acts of self-penance (e.g. not eating meat products, experiencing fatigue and hardship).					

29. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, how important for you were each of the following religious experiences while taking part in the Festival?

(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Not Important	No View
a) Fasting in preparation for, and during, the period of the Festival.					
b) Taking part in the pilgrimage (walking).					
c) Following set rituals when collecting sacred water.					
d) Worshipping in a temple at Ganga Talao.					
e) Attending prayers and observing rituals for the Char Pahar Ki Pooja.					
f) Carrying the Kanwar.					
g) Performing special acts of worship that were additional to your religious activities.					

THE MAHA SHIVARATRI FESTIVAL

30. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No View
a) Taking part in the Festival is important as it shows a higher level of religious commitment than normal religious observance.					

b) Taking part in the Festival is important because it provides an opportunity for Mauritian Hindus to confirm their social identity as being a Hindu.					
c) Taking part in the Festival is important because it provides an opportunity for Mauritian Hindus to confirm their religious identity as being a Hindu.					

31. The last time you participated in the Maha Shivaratri Festival, how important were each of the following in contributing to the authentic character of the festival for you:

	<i>(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)</i>				
	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Not Important	No View
a) Fasting in preparation for, and during, the period of the Festival.					
b) The wearing of appropriate and traditional clothes during the journey.					
c) Carrying a Kanwar during the journey.					
d) The hospitality of other Hindus who provided free food and drink, toilets and bathing facilities during the journey.					
e) Visiting other temples during the journey.					
f) Experiencing self-penance during the journey due to the fatigue and hardship involved.					
g) The natural environment (e.g. landscape) around Ganga Talao.					
h) Being close to the 108 feet Lord Shiva statue (Mangal Mahadev) at Ganga Talao.					
i) The sacred atmosphere (e.g. bell ringing, camphor and incense burning) at Ganga Talao.					
j) Making an offering at the lakeside.					
k) Collecting the sacred water from the lake.					
l) Having a collective experience with other Hindus at Ganga Talao.					
m) Following established religious behaviours (e.g. carrying out rituals, praying) at Ganga Talao.					
n) Pouring the sacred water on the Shivling for the Char Pahar ki Pooja.					
o) Actively participating in the Char Pahar Ki Pooja (e.g. making offerings to the Shivling).					

TOURISTS AT THE MAHA SHIVARATRI FESTIVAL

32. If there was a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the festival how strongly would you agree or disagree with the following statements. *(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No View
a) If more tourists resulted in improved infrastructure (e.g. roads, pavements, toilet facilities) I would welcome this.					
b) I would not wish to see the presence of more tourists resulting in the commercialisation of 'en-route' services (e.g. food distribution become payable), accommodation and refreshment provision.					
c) I would not want increased numbers of tourists to result in increased numbers of hawkers selling both religious and non-religious items at Ganga Talao.					
d) I would not want to see tourists at Ganga Talao interfering with the devotees' ability to perform the necessary religious rituals (e.g. collecting water and worshipping Lord Shiva).					

e) I would be concerned that increased numbers of tourists would reduce the social benefits shared and enjoyed by Hindu participants during the Festival.					
f) If, when observing the Festival, tourists are respectful of our Hindu heritage in the way they behave and dress then there is no problem.					
g) I would not want an increased number of tourists to turn the Festival into a 'spectacle' for tourists.					

33. If there was a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to watch what was happening at the Festival how strongly would you agree or disagree with the following statements about the effect on your religious experience.
(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No View
a) Infrastructure development to accommodate increased tourist numbers at Ganga Talao may cause changes to the site which, by changing the sense of place, will adversely affect my overall religious experience.					
b) More tourists are likely to cause congestion along the pilgrimage route and thus will have an adverse effect upon my overall religious experience.					
c) More tourists visiting Ganga Talao at the time of the Festival will reduce my ability to perform the necessary religious rituals (e.g. collect water and worship Lord Shiva), and this would negatively affect my religious experience.					
d) More tourists will adversely affect the overall ambience of the walk and this will impact negatively upon my religious experience.					
e) More tourists will be a threat to my ability to meditate upon God(s) and upon my own religious values and life.					
f) More tourists will be a threat to the sacredness of Ganga Talao and therefore to my religious experience.					
g) More commercial provision for tourists along the pilgrimage routes would dilute the sacred atmosphere and this would negatively affect my religious experience.					

34. Do you agree that, in order to gain the economic benefits of having more tourists, and thereby more tourist spending, it is worth potentially losing some of religious/spiritual atmosphere of the Festival by providing each of the following?
(Put an 'X' in one box for each statement.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No View
a) More parking facilities along the pilgrimage routes.					
b) More parking facilities at Ganga Talao.					
c) More shopping facilities at Ganga Talao.					
d) More food and drink outlets at Ganga Talao.					
e) Making provision so that the 'spectacle' of the Festival can be better observed.					
f) More cleaning staffs to keep the sacred place clean at all times.					
g) More hotel and guest house facilities at Ganga Talao.					
h) More infrastructural development (e.g. pavement, toilet facilities) at Ganga Talao.					

PROFILE OF RESPONDENT

35. Gender (Put an 'X' in the appropriate box.) Male ☐ Female ☐
36. What is your age?
37. In which district do you live?
38. Your Marital Status (Put an 'X' in only one box below.)
- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Single? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Married / with a partner? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Divorced? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Widowed? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
39. Do you have any children? (Put an 'X' in the appropriate box.) Yes ☐ No ☐
40. What is your highest level of educational qualification? (Put an 'X' in only one box below.)
- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| a) No formal qualifications. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Primary / Secondary. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Vocational Education. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Undergraduate University Degree. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Postgraduate University Degree. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Other (please describe in the space provided): <input style="width: 250px;" type="text"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
41. What is your employment status? (Put an 'X' in only one box below.)
- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| a) Studying. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Employed. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Self-employed. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Unemployed / seeking job. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Retired. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Housewife / Houseman. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Other (please specify in the space provided): <input style="width: 250px;" type="text"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
42. What is your monthly income before tax in Mauritian Rupees?
43. Do you live in an extended family (with grandparents)? (Put an 'X' in the appropriate box.) Yes ☐ No ☐
44. Which of the following best describes you? (Put an 'X' in only one box below.)
- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| a) Brahmins - 'Maraze'. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Kshatriyas - 'Baboojee'. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Vaishyas - 'Vaish'. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Shudras - 'Rajput'. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Shudras - 'Ravived'. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Other (please specify in the space provided): <input style="width: 250px;" type="text"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
45. Which of the following best describes you? (Put an 'X' in only one box below.)
- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| a) Religiously observant – you believe and attend religious services. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Religious but not observant - you believe but do not often attend religious services. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) A religious leader. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) A non-believer. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
46. Over the last month, how many times have you attended religious services at your local temple?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your participation has been most valuable.