

## **SACRALIZING THE CHURCH INSIDE A MALL: REDEFINING RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Maria Virginia G. Aguilar, Edwin F. Lineses

Social Sciences Department, De la Salle University-Dasmariñas, Philippines

Email: mgaguilar@dlsud.edu.ph, eflineses@dlsud.edu.ph

Received date: 19/6/2018| Accepted date: 22/5/2019| Published date: 12/12/2019  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51200/bimpeagajtsd.v8i1.3170>

### **ABSTRACT**

The potential for drawing tourists to the Philippines may be facilitated through religious tourism, the type of tourism that involves pilgrimage to sacred sites as act of worship. As the only largely Christian nation in Asia, the Philippine government hopes to increase tourist arrivals, particularly among Catholics worldwide to visit the multitudes of magnificent churches all through-out the islands and to marvel at the vibrancy of Filipino Catholicism. The present paper however argues that visiting these churches may show how deep-seated religiosity is among Filipinos but does not show the complete picture because some churches that Filipinos that frequent are inside malls, which traditionally do not pass as pilgrimage sites. The study intends to describe the experiences of Catholic Filipinos who attend mass and other church services in a mall church to ultimately delve on the possibility of considering these mall churches as part of pilgrimage in the Philippines. Using key informant interviews and survey, several findings are notable. First, church goers in a mall church believe that a space can be made sacred, and hence, the place where mass is celebrated does not matter so much. Second, there is ambivalence as to the notion of considering mall church as a pilgrimage destination because mall churches are devoid of religio-historical significance which regular churches have, but with the Filipinos' penchant for malling, church attendance is high in these mall churches. Third, despite the secularizing effect of globalization, church attendance among Filipinos remains high because churches are established where people flock such as the malls. The study concludes that it might be oversight to simply dismiss mall churches as pitiable alternatives to the typical church because Filipinos patronize it. It is recommended that future studies on religious tourism include a more thorough investigation of mall church-going to gain a more nuanced grasp of the uniqueness of Filipino religiosity.

**Keywords:** sacred space, religious tourism, mall church, religiosity

### **1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Tourism motivated by religion has been an age-old practice worldwide, and in fact, may be as ancient as religion itself. Experts consider it as the oldest type of tourism, and is not limited only to Christians. It is a phenomenon found in established religions, as well as in a number of smaller religious communities in every cultural part of the world. Recent estimates reveal that there are about 200 million pilgrims who participate in international, national, and supraregional pilgrimage journeys (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). In addition, there is yet the unaccounted number of travelers who annually gather at regional religious centers or at religious ceremonies and conferences, and who often are not counted as pilgrims. Tourists who take part in religious tourism have specific activities: going to religious center with local, regional, or supraregional pilgrimage sites or to participate in a religious

celebrations, religious conferences, or church meetings. However, the activities associated with religious tourism have changed because at present, pilgrims do not just visit religious sites. For example, for the participants of organized pilgrimages, a free day is often planned in the program so that the pilgrims can also make other trips into the surrounding area. In Lourdes for instance, pilgrims take a side trip to scenic spots in Andorra in the east, to Biarritz in the west, and to the Spanish Pyrennees in the south (Rinschede, 1992). In Rome, where the religious sites are simultaneously significant cultural sites, the connection between pilgrimage and cultural tourism is especially pronounced. This presupposes that pilgrims are open to the notion that it is acceptable to visit locales and places not popularly deemed as religious sites.

Filipinos are no different from these pilgrims and the Philippines is no different from these pilgrimage sites. The religious landscape of the Philippines is a fertile ground for religious tourism. The Philippines proudly claims as the lone Christian nation in the Asian continent. Furthermore, more than 80 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, about 6 percent belong to various smaller Christian sects, and another 2 percent belong to over a hundred Protestant denominations (Dolan, 2010).

Among the Catholics, one popular pilgrimage site is the Intramuros, found in Manila, the capital city of the Philippines. The popularity of Intramuros is well -documented since it was built. At the turn of the 20th century, the great American architect and city planner Daniel Burnham noted that the old walled city of Intramuros at the mouth of the Pasig River is one of the best preserved medieval cities anywhere in the world (Bernad, 1971).

What makes Intramuros extra special is that it boasts of magnificent age-old churches, fortifications and other structures even at present despite the fact that the Philippines is situated within the Pacific Ring of Fire. Intramuros necessitated structures that could survive the tremendous earthquakes which have rocked the region. History tells that most structures had been damaged by earthquakes, fires, wars but like a phoenix, the structures rose again, thanks to the persistence of the Spaniards and hard work of the Filipinos and Chinese. The Spaniards like Father Sedeño drew the plans themselves but it was the natives and the Sangley laborers who quarried stones, did the finishing and laid them (Molina, 1960). The Spaniards had rich experience in stone construction and urban planning but it was the Filipino and Chinese artisans and skilled laborers who materialized these plans (Zaragosa, 1990). Thus, the structures in Intramuros are testaments to the craftsmanship, dedication, hard work of native Filipinos and Chinese.

It is important to single out the splendid churches that Filipinos built. These demonstrate how deep-seated the religiosity of the Filipino is, especially when one takes into account the description of Fr. Villaroel in the late 1800: for 157 days in the year, the people are kept busy and watchful of the numerous spiritual benefits the church offered them (cited by Pompeyo de Mesa,n.d).

A pilgrimage to Intramuros churches would show how religious Filipinos are if church attendance is indicative of religious vitality. However, any church in the Philippines would show that Filipinos are church goers by the sheer number of people who attend mass. Thus,tourists who embark on religious tourism would be fascinated by the volume of people attending services, especially on Sundays, where masses are usually held three times in the morning and three times in the afternoon. However, what seems to be excluded from religious pilgrimage in the Philippines is a visit to churches that could be considered non- traditional as their structures are not separate entities and their architecture do not resemble what's typical. These churches also have big number of attendees during church

services, specifically on Sundays. What is referred to here are churches inside malls or the conduct of mass or worship in a space inside a mall. Anecdotal evidence would show how malling and church-going has intersected in the Philippines, and the seeming lack of contradiction might be better contextualized when globalization in general and consumerism in particular, are used as the backdrop. Following this, the paper argues that religious tourism must accommodate how Filipinos have reconceptualized religion against the backdrop of globalization that has altered facets of the lives of Filipinos. Hence, tourists that limit their pilgrimage to centuries-old churches might not fully grasp how deep-seated religiosity is among Filipinos. A visit to mall churches would show a holistic picture of Filipino religiosity amidst the impact of globalization.

### **1.1 Globalization and Filipino Religiosity**

—Globalization lies at the heart of modern culture; cultural practices lie at the heart of globalization||

-Tomlinson, 1999, p. 1

The dynamics of globalization dramatically changed virtually every human experience (Tomlinson, 1991; Pieterse, 2009; Carr, 2005). It is a complex process involving rapid social change simultaneously occurring in almost all dimensions of human activity. It permeates the realms of politics, economics, environment, technology, transportation, communications, culture, and even religion.

According to Tomlinson (1999), the core of globalization is the process of accelerating connectivity. This refers to the rapidly developing interconnections and interdependencies characterizing modern social life. Consequently, this describes the nature and the implications of these connectivities in everyday routines of people across allfrontiers.

Globalization has affected global consumption and widespread consumerism. Tolentino (2001) argued that globalization has helped in the proliferation of malls asbusiness enterprises because of consumer demands. Malls thrive as markets for demands since they try to meet consumer demands and also create more consumer wants. Malls, Tolentino further argued, effectively serve as venues that can feed this cycle of consumerism.

The pervasiveness of malls in the Philippines has transformed urban landscape and malling has become central in the daily lives of many Filipinos. The prevalence of malls in the country speaks of the people's penchant for malling. Rico and De Leon (2017) recorded that SM Prime Holdings alone boasts for 61 malls nationwide, three of which is included among the world's ten largest malls. SM malls have a total of 7.54 million square meters in floor area with 17,333 tenants and 79,718 parking slots. Added to SM are Robinsons' 44 malls, and Ayala's 16 malls, nationwide.

Filipinos love to mall (Panao, 2008). Malls provide various goods and services all under one roof, in one-stop-shop to draw the most people from all walks of life. As one mall jingle resonates, -We got it all for you!|| Services that are even thought incongruous in materialistic malls are also accommodated, i.e. mall owners provide spaces for the Catholic Church to hold mass celebrations in a —circus-like commercial environment|| (Panao, 2003; Tolentino, 2001).

It is no surprise that mass celebrations are held in almost every mall. Somera (1998) states that worship services in malls are surmised as superficial and attendance is not a deliberate expression of spirituality but rather just incidental. Moreover, some believe that the celebration of the Holy Eucharist is shrouded with a tinge of commercialism and consumerism given the idea that a mall is a marketplace than a place to foster spirituality. Despite the seeming disapproval however, more and more churches are established inside malls. A good example would be a big chapel per se in a mall in Makati (the central business district of the Philippines) where people could be observed patiently standing in long queues to enter the chapel (falling in line averages 30 minutes before one can enter the chapel). How could the celebration of mass in such chapel differ from the mass celebrations in parishes or in the lobby or activity centers of many other malls? Should participants in religious tourism include visits to these churches-in-malls to see how different Filipino religiosity is? How do these commercial, therefore secular spaces become sacred, hence fitting for the celebration of mass and/or other worship activities?

## **1.2 Religious Space and its construction**

Mircea Eliade states that space can become religious through diverse instantiations of —the sacred—, thereby creating —hierophanies—, that is, the manifestation of a higher being; the place where the hierophany occurs becomes a sacred place (Eliade, 1959). The essence of a sacred place is that it puts one in contact with God/s. This means that the creator of the sacred space is prepared to practice his faith through prayer after having sacralized the profane space. Clearly signified is the idea that people intentionally set out to construct —sacred space— (p.26). Human actions make a profane space sacred.

Sacred places are marked off from the world at large by the preparation that must be undertaken before entering it, what Mircea Eliade calls "gestures of approach," (p.24) and by the behavior that must be followed while in it. Baruch Bokser (1985) cites an example of this. The author of 1 Kings 8 elucidates that —while God may be found in the whole world, the LORD may make the divine presence more acutely felt in certain places. God may therefore be in a specified locale but need not be limited to it— (p.280). Could this thesis justify why malls are venues of sacred celebrations?

In general, landscapes have multiple and contested meanings. This applies to places important among particular religions. Thus, there are agreed-upon sacred places, which are recognized by insiders and often regarded so by respectful outsiders. Grapard (1982) states that in Japan, historical investigations have been underway to make all of Japan a sacred site (Grapard, 1982). This sacralization was originally seen as determined by a spontaneous manifestation of the divine (through external power) in its many forms. Presently however, there has been a redefining of how sacralization can ensue. It can be also determined through experience or by way of internal power. This might be seen as a process of integration of the divine and human realms. Grapard cites Hayashi Razan, a Shinto and Confucian thinker of the beginning of the Edo period, who came to this conclusion: "The divine is located within the heart-mind of human beings." Thus, "drinking a bowl of tea, washing one's face," are seen as Buddha acts and that any time, any space, was sacred— (p.198).

These special places should be approached differently through special preparations, which an individual does not do for an ordinary place. Again, Bokser (1985) gives the following example: Moses took off his shoes before drawing near to the burning bush; priests, Levites, and Israelites must avoid impurities and follow various standards before

entering the tabernacle. Although these places are not inherently holy and cannot become holy on their own, they may yet become holy or sacred through human action. Even those objects that are considered inherently holy generally gain that quality as a result of human action: the regular gathering of ten people, for example, is what makes a synagogue a synagogue.

Since a space can be made sacred, every place potentially may be sanctified. A space in actuality awaits the human act to sanctify it. Hence, the protocol of respect applies only when this action is done. Bokser (1985) further explains that among the Jews, the early rabbinic system, recognizing the potential for sacredness in the whole world, were taught that extra- temple sacredness needs to be activated. Accordingly, it is when people take steps to initiate the sacred that they must pursue the correct gestures of approach.

How then is a place sacralized or made sacred? How do humans create sacred spaces? How do worshipers transform an ordinary space to a sacred space?

Religious space, as a concept can be figured out in many different ways, focusing on what is conceived to be sacred. Kiong and Kong (2000) wrote that studies on the designation of religious meanings in places have cut across disciplines, and have proceeded principally along four lines. Foremost is the investigation of macro and microcosmic parallelism which involves the symbolic religious meanings invested in cities, kingdoms, palaces and temples, particularly in their physical layout, particularly in terms of how the world of humans is patterned after the domain of gods. Following this is the investigation of the symbolism of religious buildings, architecture and objects. The third is the analysis of processes of investing religious meanings to places and objects, that is, the process of sanctification. The fourth is the examination of people's experience of sacred places.

Kiong and Kong (2000, p.4) further assert that researches on sacred places however have not explored on how they are negotiated or reinvented as contexts change. In other words, there is dearth of research on the processes through which places or spaces become defined as sacred or profane as the larger social circumstances modify, and notions on innovative processes and rituals which are applied to delineate sacredness.

In the study —Negotiating Conceptions of —Sacred Space||: A Case Study of Religious Buildings in Singapore||, Lily Kong (2005, p.22) relates that Christian priests and pastors tended to de-emphasize the sacredness of religious places, with the contention that religious buildings do not have a monopoly of sacredness. They reasoned that —sacredness is embodied in God, in human beings and in the community||. They further assert that one could undergo a religious experience even in seemingly mundane activities, such as sitting at the seaside while watching the sunset. They forwarded the notion that the sense of a divine presence did not mean the place was in and of itself sacred. Houston wrote that this belief came from Hebrew thought that — holy places have no innate sanctity|| (Kong, 2005).

Given the above, malls then can be sacralized, and hence can become fitting and suitable for activities that are considered sacred or religious. More importantly however is soliciting information from churchgoers as to their experience of attending religious celebrations and activities in a mall church.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study intends to describe the experience of Catholic Filipinos who attend mass and other church services in a mall church. In particular, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the experience like when one attends a mass in a mall church? Is it different from attending a mass in an actual church structure? How so?
2. What do Filipinos think about going to church in a mall? Does the volume of mall churchgoers indicate vibrancy of religiosity among Filipinos? Why?
3. Should pilgrims visiting the Philippines for religious tourism include mall churches as important places of pilgrimage? Why?

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study focuses on an emergent Filipino culture of religiosity in the ambit of globalization and modernity. It demonstrates the expression of religiosity in the midst of a marketplace. This paper attempts to unravel the meaning of the celebration of the mass (Eucharist) in a mall church from the vantage point of parishioners. This ferrets out explanation for attending mass in the mall over regular parishes, which is the domain of religious profession. The study consequently described the mall mass-goers.

To facilitate the gathering of data, the study use two methods. Survey was used to investigate the experience of 30 mall churchgoers, who were chosen through convenience sampling.

To gather in depth data, key informant interviews were done among 10 regular churchgoers, where techniques of ethnography as methods of inquiry were utilized. Indigenous research methods of groping [*—pakapa-kapa*] (Santiago, 1979) as a field method and casual asking of questions [*—patanong-tanong*], which includes cultural sensitivity or shared sensitivities [*—pakikiramdam*] (Pe-Pua, 1990) were employed.

## **4.0 RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

### **4.1 Mall church-going: quality, efficiency, and convenience**

People who enter the church in the mall come for a recognized reason of attending a mass: this much is clear, but nuances of a different sense of religiosity can be gleaned. Through the course of time new meanings, new practices, new significances and experiences (Dundes, 1980) that are brought into the spectrum of inquiry on this emergent religious culture must be considered. The mass-goers of the chapel in the mall have developed their own way and their reasons for doing things as they commonly celebrate the Holy Eucharist.

When casually asked about the reason and the meaning of mass-going in the mall, Sister Jane (a nun), 36, answered straightforwardly in paradox that the mass-going in the chapel in mall is just the same, but is also different in a sense. When probed on her answers she went on to elaborate that,

– it's the same with regular church, because its also a mass, but... there might be something different here, it's imported, || she blurted out. She

emphasized the untold prohibitions not necessarily imposed by the chapel. She said, -there seem to be many prohibitions, but actually, there's none.|| The people thronging in the chapel have their own sense of self-imposed discipline.

—People here behave well, it's organized,|| she added to put emphasis on the management of the church. Those with babies are led in Children's Room at the left side, the elderly and differently-abled in the Adoration Chapel at the right side, and the main chapel at the center is for most mass-goers. During weekdays, however, the main chapel is closed and only the Adoration Chapel is used for the celebration of masses. She was also proud to say that Studio 23, local TV station, covers the live mass every Sunday at 9:00 AM. Likewise she gave information on the different schedule of masses for different people and nationality—i.e. Chinese mass, Charismatic, English and Filipino, and even for deaf and mute.

To accommodate and organize attendees, the chapel provided for several mass schedules. A total of seven are scheduled masses on Sundays: 9:00 AM-Charismatic Mass, 11:00 AM-Chinese Mass, 12:30 PM-English Mass, 2:00 PM-English Mass, 3:30 PM-Tagalog Mass, 5:00 PM-English Mass, 6:30 PM-Tagalog Mass. There are also two English Masses on weekdays at 12:15 PM and 6:00 PM. On Saturdays, there are four schedules: 12:15 PM-English Mass, 4:00 PM-Children's Mass, and two English Masses at 5:00 PM and 7:00 PM.

She even talked about the history of the chapel in the mall. She said,

—When masses began to be held here inside the mall, it is not in this specific place; they kept on transferring it. Then the mall owner wrote to Cardinal Sin (the highest Catholic leader in the Philippines then). At the start, it was disorganized, chaotic, and we had a small space. It was cramped too. Outside there's a Liturgy . Now, its orderly, organized, and the church is big. The mass is solemn. The temperature is also conducive to the celebration of mass, so people are not distracted. It's imported!||

Another church-goer, Mark, 20, candidly revealed that he started attending the mass because the priests in the mall deliver better homilies than those in the parishes he has attended before. He believes he has a need to attend the mass at least every week to be closer to God. He regarded that his life is lacking, if not empty, when he does not attend mass. He revealed that,

—...the mass for me is my way of getting closer to God, because I feel there's something missing, so I come here to listen to the priests who deliver good sermons. The priests in mall churches give better sermons than those in parishes...||

Before he became a regular mass-goer in the mall, he was just invited by his friends to attend a mass before they go malling. Soon after, he goes to attend the mass alone. He even said that nowadays, he goes to mass in the mall only to attend mass. He goes home immediately after the mass.

The idea that attending mass in a mall for convenience sake is verbalized by Rommel, 28. He confidently expressed his personal desire to celebrate the Holy Eucharist because he believes in its social dimension. He considered it as his responsibility to God to develop friendships and goodwill to people, which he can accomplish in attending mass. He also believes he gets intellectual, emotional, and spiritual benefits from attending the mass and it is what completes his days or weeks.

In his very own words he said,

—A mass has a social part. Isn't it that priests approve of hearing mass anywhere, even televised mass? The most important thing is not the place, but when mass goes develop good friendships with other churchgoers, especially since during mass, the priest says, 'peace be with you' and we reply 'and also with you.' A mass also does more to me apart from spiritual nourishment. Intellectually, you have to understand what the gospel says, the homily, the readings. Emotionally, you feel good after hearing a mass, as if burden is lifted from you, making you strong and ready to face problems. This is why we should go to mass not because He needs us but because we need Him... I am guilty. I need to attend mass because we need the Lord. We need others...||

He attends mass in the mall because of proximity to his workplace, EDSA Central, which is just a short walk away.

To Ador, 40, who regularly attends mass during Sundays right after work, it is just opportune that he attends the mass in the mall because he is already there. To wit, he said, —since I am already here, why not attend mass.|| He also shared his sentiment that since life is difficult these days, he attends mass to ask for help from God. Likewise, through the mass he is thanking God for the blessing he receives and keeping him safe from harm or illnesses. where his daily assignment is.

The same story was related by Allan, 25, who almost always attends mass in the mall before he goes to work at 2:00 PM. He goes to the mall to attend the mass because he just works in a company, which is near Megamall. He usually attends mass even before he works there because he believes giving time to God is his responsibility aside from asking God for help and guidance in his everyday work. To him, it is his principle to be religious.

Some churchgoers however single out the choice of priest as the most important reason for going to the mall church. Alice, 54, says she attends the mass at Megatrade Hall since 1998 since she is a fan of Fr. Mario Sobrejuanite, whom she finds a great speaker. She regarded her weeks empty if she does not attend mass. She also thought of attending the mass as an obligation to God. In so doing, she feels good and closer to God when she attends.

Another respondent Rudolfo, 42, gave a more casual reason for choosing the mall church instead. He has only attended the mass in the mall twice. He was only waiting for his documents to be processed and thought of going to the chapel to attend mass. He however believes it is his obligation to do so. Since he is already in the mall and found out about the chapel then why not he spent it for a while in chapel than just in shops? To make the most of time, he spent time in the chapel as well to pray for a good fortune in his quest for overseas work.



The same sentiment was echoed by Agnes, 25 and Ana, 34, who believed that attending mass in the mall is the same as attending it in a parish church. When asked why in the mall, they said it is the practical thing to do because they get to do so many things in one place. —It's all here... we go to mass, do the groceries, have lunch, and sometimes go to the parlor, etc.|| The mass in the chapel is solemn and they found the priests in the chapel very engaging than most of the priests in their local parish.

The value added to their attending mass in the mall is,

—maximizing time... we parked only once... get to do everything in less time compared to going to the parish church then going to the supermarket and other places for our errands. It's smart right? It is much cooler here too. For instance just today, Agnes has a dental appointment, during which I will be reserving tickets for a trip in Cebu this 21st... after that we'll meet for grocery. Isn't it efficient, time is gold!||

Efficiency was highlighted in the people's mass-going experience in the chapel inside the mall. The concept of a one-stop-shop provided the parishioners with added attraction. Time is of the essence to the parishioners. The very words of Agnes (and Anna) conformed to the claim of the mall owners that they got it all for us—including the most of time and a venue for worship.

#### **4.2 Vibrancy of Filipino Religiosity: Evidence from mall church-going**

Religion is central in the life of most Filipinos, including Catholics, Protestants, Islamadherents, and others (Dolan, 2010). Religion for a Filipino is a focal point not as an abstract belief system, but rather as a multitude of experiences, rituals, ceremonies, beliefs and values that provide continuity in life, cohesion in the community, and moral purpose for one's life. Experts however say that religiosity is on the decline and this is all rooted in the globalization thesis. The opposing school however insist that it is not declining, but rather taking on other forms and it has become more personal rather than a group phenomenon.

To put things in context, Filipino religiosity may illustrate this point.

The National Statistics Office reported the following statistics regarding the religious affiliation of Filipinos based from the 2015 population of 101.7 million: 80.5% Catholics, 5.57% Islam adherents, and 10.8% were Protestants. The numbers here could be considered evidence that Filipinos are indeed religious. This religiosity is even more pronounced given the 1998 Survey on Religion of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) which is done in 30 countries. The Philippines came out as number 1 (90 %) in the area of persistence of belief in God, belief in heaven (95%), belief in hell (84%) and second only to Chile in strength of belief in God ( 79%) (Mangahas, 2008). These figures imply that religion is vibrant among Filipinos. This religiosity could also be gleaned from the number of church structures that proliferates our towns and communities. What sustains this religiosity?

Respondents of this study believe that Filipinos are still very religious (55%) and accommodation is key. As one priest said,

—if people cannot go to church for whatever reasons, the church will go to them. This is why we will celebrate mass anywhere, everywhere, anytime||.

For the respondents (77%) going to church in a mall is okay and going to church, wherever it may be, inside a mall or in a regular church is a sign of religiosity (55%). However, the respondents think that between a regular church and a church in a mall, the former should be preferred than the latter. Most of them (95%) assert that solemnity is important in worship and this is severely wanting in a mall church. The peace and quiet one relishes in a traditional church make the ambiance suitable for communing with God. On the other hand, in the mall church, a lot of distractions are felt, from people moving around, music, and bright colorful lights to name a few. Moreover, religious artifacts such as pictures, statues, and other symbolic religious paraphernalia that add to the sacredness of the church and found in a regular church may not be in a mall church. Hence, most respondents expressed that,

—the normal church (italics mine) is a house of prayer and worship, of God. People come here with a single purpose, to pray. The mall is not a house of prayer. When you go to the mall, you have many reasons and attending mass is just one of them.||

A respondent agreed saying that,

—the typical church is really built for worship, the mall is not. This is why, the people who go to the mall really intends to go malling and shopping, attending mass is incidental, unintentional.||

The above illustrates the uniqueness of the Filipino articulation of religiosity at present, and it is different from how it was expressed before.

### **4.3 Mall Church as Pilgrim Sites? : Views of Mall Church goers**

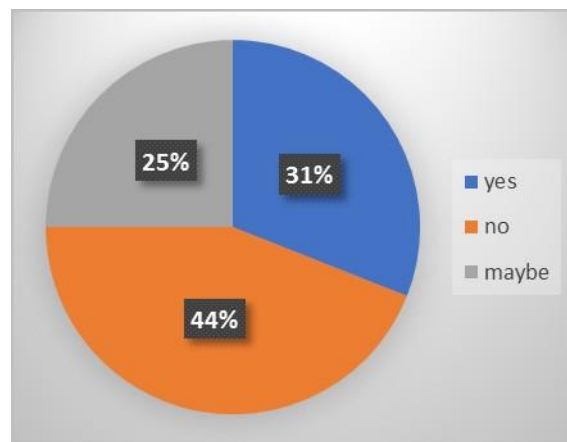
The typical and traditional view of what a pilgrimage and a pilgrim is an arena of contestation. For a long time, a pilgrimage is understood as a journey of a believer (a pilgrim) to a sacred place to commune with God. Pilgrimage sites most often are tied to the birth, life, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Later pilgrimages included visits to sites associated with the Apostles, Saints and Christian martyrs, as well as places where there had been apparitions of the Virgin Mary. Historically, pilgrims would leave their homes, families, and comforts to walk for hundreds of miles with nothing but what they could carry on their backs.

This traditional notion has been replaced by differing views owing to discrepant discourses and interpretations appealing to scholars during the 1990s and hitherto, era when postmodern fragmentation became sort of a norm. As special attention in various areas of academic research have looked at this phenomenon, a broad corpus of ethnographic, comparative and analytic studies has become available, and the pilgrimage has been *regained, localized, re-invented, contested, deconstructed, explored, intersected, reframed,* etc. from a variety of academic perspectives (Rinschede, 1992). However, the results of all these different approaches have certainly not led to a fully

crystallized academic picture of the pilgrimage phenomenon. There are still plenty of open questions, and distinct perspectives and schools of thoughts. Thus, in recent decades the question of what the term pilgrimage means exactly and what should be regarded as the criteria for a pilgrimage has only become more complicated.

This complication is caused in part by people's ever-changing views on the nature, creation, and management of hallowed place, the pilgrim–tourist dichotomy, the economics of religious tourism, and the educational implications of religious tourism (Collins-Kreiner, 2010).

Following this line, respondents of this study were asked on whether mall churches should be considered pilgrimage sites, and be included in pilgrimage journeys in the context of religiosity in the Philippines. The figure below summarizes the respondents' thoughts on this.



**Figure 1. Do you think tourists who are doing religious pilgrimage should visit mall church?**

The traditional notion that pilgrimage site should have a sense of history is the most important reason for the no responses by 44% of the respondents. As succinctly put by one of them,

—I think the purpose of tourists doing religious pilgrimage is to visit and appreciate the church's structure and history itself and of course to worship and reflect and I think mall churches don't have those characteristics.||

However, the yes and the maybe responses (31%, 25% respectively) show ambivalence, which could be surmised as openness to the notion that a mall church could be considered a sacred place worthy of a pilgrim's visit or that venue of service is irrelevant, it is the worship that is. One respondent explains this idea,

—When we go to church on Sundays, church does not really mean place, it refers to the people of believers. It is our commitment to the Lord to worship Him, thanksgiving, and fellowship with our family or other church goers. Place does not really matter as long as our hearts are ready to worship God because we are supposed to worship Him everyday and **everywhere** (emphasis mine).||

Other reasons pointed out that faith is what matters when attending a mass, more than the venue:

—It's not the location anymore but I am looking in a lens of how strong your faith is and how you perceive God as your one and only saviour regardless of the location of the mass; whether be it in a church or a mass in a mall.||

Another respondent concurred stressing that,

—While it is ideal that the place of worship be in a normal church, when a person truly wants to commune with God, **venue is irrelevant** (emphasis mine).||

From the above, it can be said religiosity is beyond the choice of where worship is practiced, which consequently is tied to how people express their religiosity and how they make sense of their own spirituality. The shift in how we make sense of religion is echoed by how religious tourism has also altered. Thus, the popularity of religious travel can be seen not only in the increase of religiously motivated travel to sacred sites but also in the inclusion of how spirituality is understood, that it can be divorced from place of worship. Hence, it is implied that the concept of religion has shifted with the advent of modern secularizing trends, such as post-industrialism, cultural pluralism, and scientific rationality (Baum 2000), which have, according to some social commentators, led to decreasing significance of religious institutions and their associated practices (Houtman and Mascini 2002). As such, the term —religion|| is used in everyday public discourse loosely to mean different things to different people.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

The mass-going experience in the mall is seen within the context of globalization. The idea of the mall is in itself a product of a venue for world markets. The mall is not just an air-conditioned plaza for promenaders and their families but also a temple of high-grade capitalism and rampant materialism (The UP Forum, 2008). The slogan —we got it all for you|| gives us the impression and invitation to quality, convenience and efficiency.

Globalization is equated with modernization. The preceding concepts derived from globalization were manifested even in the people's celebration of the mass in the chapel. Following the idea, globalization is seen as a dynamics whereby the social structures of modernity are spread the world over (Scholte, 2000).

The notion of mass-going experience in the mall as imported is hegemonic. This, being imported, is a known value associated with Western culture that locates power for molding standards for others to follow (Marsella, 2005). It appears that the concept of order, discipline, and solemnity that the informants used to describe the mass-going in the chapel in the mall is -foreign|| to Filipinos who flocked the mass in local parishes. It buttressed, according to Marsella (2005), —mind colonization,|| (the control disguised in the free act of behaving accordingly of individual parishioner who entered the chapel). Nader

(1997) similarly said that there seems to exist a much superior culture, that of the —foreigners,|| and imposed upon us. The better mass celebrations marked with order, discipline, and solemnity appears to be only possible with foreign influences.

However, more than this hegemonic notion is the fact that parishioners redefined a new identity through assertions of their agencies despite their contextual environment. The parishioners in the process presupposed achievement in making new social order amidst the struggle. This is in relation to becoming —creators of knowledge|| derived from Foucault's —possibility to use one's positions within networks of power for thinking about themselves differently|| (Foucault, 1984 in Galea, 2005).

The parishioners articulated their strategies of acting out the roles that they have been assigned but in acting them out they had the opportunity to redefine their roles and give them new meanings (Galea, 2005). This appropriation or the interplay of the self with social conceptions and expectations brought out parishioners' formulated identity fashioned to make their own, to reorder them, adapt them, and otherwise transform them (Rockwell, 1996). After all, hegemony and cultural production are contingent processes, and the structure, important as it may be, is only one force among many in the lives of the people (Levinson, 1996).

The globalization's thrust of modernity is viewed as the quality sought by the mass-goers in the chapel in the mall. These mass-going reasons of convenience and efficiency are likewise seen in globalization's description of the condition of global modernity—connectivity and proximity (Tomlinson, 1999).

It should be seen that they preferred mass-going in the chapel because it gave them a perfect venue for a focused worship, prayer and adoration in a comfortable or clean and air-conditioned location, where safety is guaranteed by the setting. The celebration of mass in the chapel inside the mall allowed the parishioners to make the most of their time in this fast-paced world, without neglecting the very essence of their acts of worship through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

It should be noted that parishioners in the chapel in the mall see the phenomenon of mass-going convenient to them. To many informants, the option to celebrate the Eucharist in the mall instead in regular parishes, implied expediency on their part. Aside from attending the mass as the main reason, their attending in the mall is prompted by their proximity or accessibility to where they were, where they are, and where will they be after the observation of the ritual.

This mall mass going phenomenon is an emergent culture as a process in which, new meanings, new practices, new significances and experiences are continually being created (Williams, 1973). Suffice it to say that what mass-goers do from what they learned from somewhere or somebody, coupled with contestations they appropriated are producing an emergent culture of their own. It is participating in the production of a new social distinction, being learned, shared, and communicated—culture (Perry, 2003), where they are very much a part of the dynamic process (Skinner & Holland, 1996).

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