

Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism

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Abstract | Tourism plays a critical role in the economies of numerous countries worldwide. Religious tourism is a significant aspect of cultural tourism. The purpose of religious tourism is to visit holy places and religious centres outside one's country for a maximum of six months. Alternatively, this idea can be seen as an endeavour to offer services to religious tourists. Participating in worshipping and praying is possible through Pilgrimage tourism. The classification of the Pilgrimage can also be based on the number of people involved, such as individuals, families, or groups. Long and short pilgrimages can be identified by considering the tour's duration. Domestic and foreign tours are available based on the shrine's location. The purpose of this study is to present a review of the literature on religious tourism, which is becoming increasingly important. The data collection occurred through various stages. First, a search was conducted using the keywords “Religious tourism” and “Pilgrimage tourism” to find relevant documents for the research. In the second step, researchers identified the most useful databases, which include Scopus, Web of Science and Science Direct, as the main academic databases. VOSviewer was also used to visually depict the research done to date on Scopus. The other research technique was

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autoethnography. It involves examining and reflecting on personal experiences through a cultural lens. Key themes and new developments in religious tourism have been emphasized, along with its overlaps with other tourism sectors. The literature on religious tourism that this study reviews spans over a decade.

Keywords | tourism, marketing, satisfaction, sustainable tourism development, literature review

1. Introduction

Tourism influences national economies and plays a major role in the global economy. Much funding is being granted, including in the European Union, to support the sustainable comeback of tourism, following the COVID-19 pandemic, which greatly damaged the sector, due to the successive lockdowns and prohibition of travel. One such international project co-funded by the European Union is TourX [official project name: CoVEs for the Tourism Industry; Project 101056184], with funding of around 4 million euros, divided amongst 23 experienced partners. “TOUR-X envisions to create excellence in Tourism through a bottom-up approach where the Education providers of the partnership will enhance their ability to adapt skills provision to everchanging economic and social needs.” (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/tourxcoves/>). One such social need, which is increasingly arising, is the need to believe in something higher and greater than ourselves – namely, in religion. Hence the appearance of this article, to deepen our knowledge on the subject. Coupled to the ever-diminishing costs regarding travel and the seeking of accommodation, which make religious tourism possible and accessible to mostly anyone, means that the industry is a force to contend with and well worth an investment in research into the area.

Religious tourism is the act of believers travelling for pilgrimage, mission work, or leisure (Petroman et al., 2011). Iliev (2020) states that religious travel combines spiritual and economic needs for both travellers and destinations. Pilgrimages or visits to holy sites are common among religiously motivated travelers. Increased interest in religious tourism by businesspeople has economic benefits for residents (Duran-Sanchez et al., 2018). Religious identity is shaped and influenced by individual and communal experiences and interactions. Religious travel is growing rapidly as a niche market, with more people traveling internationally (Rashid, 2018).

Religious tourism and pilgrimages aim to achieve sustainable development and preserve cultural heritage, natural resources, and traditional values, while ensuring tourist satisfaction. By incorporating critical systems thinking, we can promote sustainability within the tourism industry. The approach promotes effective practices and alternative systems in tourism. Pilgrimage helps promote sustainable tourism development through a holistic approach (Romanelli et al., 2021). Pilgrimage shows how spiritual and emotional knowledge are connected and can be transformed into different forms. Dynamic knowledge processes are enabled by emotions and spiritual values (Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2020).

We can classify pilgrimage tourism or faith tourism into three types (Petroman et al., 2011):

- The pilgrimage follows traditional customs;
- Travelling for missionary or humanitarian purposes;
- Travel for soul-searching.

The scope of this study is restricted to the first type of religious tourism. The study analyses religious tourism, specifically pilgrimages, to support tourism development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Religious Tourism

As per Ozturk et al. (2021), international tourism involves the transfer of individuals across national borders to visit historical landmarks and engage in leisure activities for a duration of up to a year. Religious tourism is a type of tourism that involves visiting sacred sites to conduct religious ceremonies. Visitors from around the world were attracted to various elements such as the service level, environment, and cost (Huang & Pearce, 2019). The religious affiliations and beliefs of visitors from around the globe also attract religious pilgrims. This form of tourism is now recognized as faith-based travel, in which travellers carry out their religious practices (Tabash et al., 2023). Some studies define religious tourism as the pilgrimage travels of people from various religions (Heydari Chianeh et al., 2018; Mamarasulovna et al., 2021). Additionally, Bideci and Albayrak (2016), suggested that religious tourism may visit a place due to curiosity or fascination and also enjoy some of the available supporting amenities. Visits to religious sites are best

described as “religious tourism” although “pilgrimage” and “spiritual tourism” are frequently used interchangeably (Melissa Tsai, 2021).

Religious tourism encompasses a range of activities, such as pilgrimage, missionary travel, and attending religious gatherings and events (Collins-Kreiner, 2020). Religious tourism requires consideration of distinct religious concepts and ideas, as well as the pilgrimage and its participants, unique to each religion (Mamarasulovna & Tohirovich, 2021). Yoo et al. (2022), suggest that religious tourism is a fundamental type of tourism. Iliev (2020) discusses pilgrimage for both secular and religious reasons. Religious tourism is the act of visiting spiritual destinations that align with the visitors' spiritual needs and the economic goals of those destinations. Consequently, boosting the inclination towards tourism is justifiable as it can accelerate global economic progress. Nevertheless, the probability of religious tourism contributing positively to the environment is considerable. Additionally, the increase in pilgrims from abroad improves transportation operations and boosts the demand for domestic goods (Tabash et al., 2023). Religious tourism usually occurs during certain seasons and overlaps with other types of tourism like group travel, cultural and social tours, and vacations. Amaro et al. (2018) suggest that tourists participate in religious festivals and events, as well as ancillary activities, to immerse themselves in local cultures, customs, rites, architecture, or natural landscapes. According to Haq and Wong (2010), spiritual tourists are specialized travellers with specific needs. The term spiritual tourism, coined by Wilson et al. (2013), refers to vacation packages that offer opportunities for worship and pilgrimage in addition to leisure and social pursuits.

2.2 The Relationship between Tourism and Religion

Religion originated from people's interpretations of dreams, trances, and death. The term “animism” was invented by him to describe the belief that everything has a soul, which he believed was the initial form of religion. Studies suggest that religion fulfils people's psychological needs, despite disagreements about its origins, regardless of the cult or belief. According to Malinowski (1994) cited in González & Fernández (2022), religion is necessary for people as they believe in it to interpret or give meaning to the tragedy of death. The fear of dying that humans inherently have is compounded by their anxiety about losing those closest to them. The fact that most faiths embrace ancestor worship or a belief in the afterlife is an indication that they fulfil a social function. Tourism can serve as a medium to foster comprehension among various religions and civilizations,

thereby promoting knowledge of one's cultural heritage and that of others. Religious practices, celebrations, and rituals at pilgrimage sites attract both faithful and non-religious tourists. Religious tourism involves travellers who visit holy places or take part in religious events to experience their essence, significance, or beauty, but the distinction lies in their motivations. Religious tourists and pilgrims may overlap. Some pilgrims are motivated solely by religion, while others are pilgrim tourists or tourists seeking cultural experiences. The same space and activities are often shared by religious and non-religious pilgrims and tourists alike.

2.3 Religious Tourism Marketing

Štefko et al. (2015) notes: that pilgrimage, spiritual tourism, and religious tourism are interpreted by researchers in overlapping ways. Religious tourism is categorized as a service product in marketing management. Service quality is essential since it is a service product. The dimensions of service quality are expounded upon by Parasuraman et al. (1988), quoted in Handriana et al. (2019), intangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy is all included. Akroush et al. (2016) also stress the importance of service quality in influencing tourist loyalty. Religious tourism is aimed at visiting religious destinations or sites to strengthen one's faith and develop a sense of spiritual or religious identity.

2.4 Tourist Satisfaction in Religious Destinations

Religious tourism involves the commercialization of religion and popular devotion, as holy places are transformed into multifunctional spaces accommodating both religious rituals and recreational activities. The development of tourism contributes to economic and social benefits at destinations, including pilgrimage sites and other religious locations that have been commercialized to satisfy both religious demands and the interests of non-religious visitors. Understanding the level of tourist satisfaction is crucial for the success and growth of this type of tourism and its resource allocation. Visitors' satisfaction after their visit is influenced by various factors such as their appreciation of the natural environment, landscape, physical accessibility, availability of services, religious sites, and their sense of religious and/or cultural identity. However, the assessment did not find any impact of one of the proposed factors, which are religious activities or rituals. Moreover, there is a considerable level of contentment among all categories of visitors participating in this form of tourism, although those with religious motivations appear to be more content with their experience than other tourists. Age and place of dwelling do not have a significant correlation with the level

of satisfaction reported. However, the frequency of visits has a positive linear connection with the degree of visitor gratification (Cànoves & M. Prat, 2016).

2.5 Route-Based Pilgrimage as an Important Market in Religious Tourism

There's a distinction between a pilgrimage and a path-based pilgrimage. The pilgrims have the option to bypass the predetermined path and travel straight to the holy sites. In contrast, route-based pilgrimage emphasizes the journey through cultural and natural landscapes rather than the destination. Pilgrims gain social, experiential, and learning opportunities along with religious and cultural knowledge development/improvement (Iliev, 2020).

2.6 Religious Tourism Resources

The product of religious tourism comprises numerous religious attractions that can be categorized into the following directions (Dimitrov, 2019):

- (a) Religious centres and holy places intended for pilgrimage visits motivated by religion.
- (b) Religious landmarks that possess both historical and artistic value.
- (c) Religious festivities and commemorations (festivals, parades, rites, services, etc.);
- (d) Objects related to religion such as cult items, souvenirs, sound recorders, and books.

Mary Nolan, an American scholar (1992) quoting in Dimitrov (2019) categorizes religious tourist attractions into three groups:

- **Sanctuaries:** Sanctuaries are considered significant religious places where religious leaders or important religious figures are believed to have worked or appeared. Devoted to Sts, Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, and others. Italy has more than 2000 churches.
- **Religious sites with complex motives to visit:** These objects hold value in more ways than just religious, including architectural, historical, and cultural significance. Monasteries, ancient churches, baptisteries, and several chapels are part of this group. Due to their universal availability, they play a complementary role in the tourist journey.

- **Religious festivals and anniversaries:** Visitors can be divided into two categories: the religious, who prefer silence and privacy for true ritual, and the tourist, who come in large, noisy groups. Valuable masterpieces of art or items with significant historical events hold them more than sanctuaries, which is why they move away. Worshiping in the presence of a senior hierarchical officer, particularly the head of the religion strengthens their mass.

2.7 Dimensions of Religious Tourism

Moaven et al. (2017) integrated religious aspects:

- **Spiritual experience:** Seeking answers about the origins of life and the cosmos involves understanding the relationship between the metaphysical universe and God.
- **Contact:** Communication is the transfer of ideas, messages, or meanings from one individual to another, often through interactions with family members or others.
- **Satisfaction:** Meng et al. (2011) defined the term “expectation-disconfirmation” as the difference between anticipated and actual product or service performance.
- **Cognition:** Comprehending a collection of beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, expectations, and other mental occurrences.
- **Self-confidence and Self-actualization:** The self-realization of one's maximum potential.
- **Cultural globalization:** It suggests a high level of intensity and a growing global exchange of goods and cultural symbols. The dimensions and indicators for cultural globalization include the internet usage rate, the import rate of cultural goods, and global language patterns.
- **Awareness towards globalization:** It demonstrates the comprehension of the participants regarding international relations and their position in them.
- **Modern information and communication techs:** Communication technologies encompass a wide range that consists of the Internet, satellite, mobile, chat, and other forms. That is utilized for interpersonal communication.

- ***Individualism:*** High value is placed on individuals, and they are considered superior to organizations.

2.8 Role of Technology

The use of technology is increasingly important in the field of religious tourism, as both suppliers and consumers benefit from it. The internet is utilized to document and map World Heritage Sites, including religious ones, while service technology channels and technology-based spiritual shows with multi-media supplements are incorporated into this sector. It is crucial to continue exploring the intersection between advanced technology and customary religious practices to create a mutually enhancing experience (Vileikis et al., 2012; Rashid, 2018). One may stumble upon unexpected discoveries through online research. Despite Goa's diverse religious traditions and rich cultural heritage, Dwivedi et al. (2009) were surprised to discover that heritage and religion were not significant features. Using netnography - a methodology that applies ethnographic research to the internet - Dwivedi (2009) observes that large cities are referenced for historical landmarks as well as religious or spiritual sites, but also unpleasant issues such as exploitation and hostility.

2.9 The Benefits of Following the Pilgrimage

Based on the accounts of our sources, embarking on the pilgrimage tour yields numerous advantages, including experiencing joy, gaining a deeper understanding of mortality, appreciating the trustees' efforts, attaining a sense of tranquillity, becoming more committed, developing greater assurance in the legitimacy of the faith, and being impressed by the guardians' dedication, which motivates them to increase their devotion. One source even proposed that the location also offers accommodations, enabling visitors to prolong their worship and thus reducing their desire to depart hastily (Handriana et al., 2019). The study by Štefko et al. (2015) found that spiritual tourism involves seeking and experiencing spirituality, religious and cultural practices, and spiritual landscapes and heritage sites. This type of tourism is seen as a way to connect with the spiritual and cultural roots of a destination, and to gain insight into different worldviews and philosophies. It is also viewed as a means to promote personal growth, well-being, and inner peace, by providing opportunities for reflection, meditation, and contemplation. Štefko et al. (2015) suggest that

spiritual tourism has the potential to contribute to sustainable tourism development, by promoting respect for cultural diversity and fostering positive relationships between tourists and local communities.

2.10 Religious Tourism Infrastructure

Different research studies have explored aspects such as lodging, travel bundles, and the satisfaction and quality of services offered in tourist destinations to acknowledge spiritual tourism as an exclusive and independent market for tourists (Kim et al., 2020; Krešić et al., 2013; Triantafillidou et al., 2010).

Krešić et al. (2013) noted that at the sacred pilgrimage shrine of Medjugorje, believers' and pilgrims' satisfaction is largely impacted by infrastructure, including accommodation, restaurants, and souvenir shops, as well as the destination's soft skills, such as the hospitality staff's courtesy and the friendliness of the locals. Triantafillidou et al. (2010) identified important factors affecting religious tourists' decision-making in package tours, including the travel agent's reputation, tour guide, schedule, and program.

2.11 Religious Tourism and Pilgrimages as Sources for Sustainable Tourism Development

The development of sustainable tourism can be facilitated by religious tourism. People who follow religion are motivated to move from one place to another in search of meaning, values, beliefs, experiences, and self-discovery. Many people also find cultural and tourist sites enriching. Pilgrimages are becoming more popular, making tourism an essential medium for religion in today's global society. Although people are becoming more educated and materialistic, religion still influences their beliefs and lifestyles, making holidays and religious practices closely intertwined (Romanelli et al., 2021). This approach also contributes towards the sustainability of tourism by considering the long-term effects on visitors, the industry, the environment, and local communities. Ultimately, this gives rise to a renewed hope that prosperity can be attained through the mindful alignment of human activity with the natural world, as explained by Hall (2019).

To ensure sustainable religious tourism, it is important to focus on enhancing relationships and organizational intelligence. This can be achieved by encouraging cooperation among companies, stakeholders, and users, and promoting sharing ideas on value creation and innovation within communities. This approach is suggested by experts in the field (Gazzola et al., 2019) as effective ways to drive social and business changes. To foster sustainability in tourism, it is essential to adopt a comprehensive and interconnected strategy that enables people, companies, and associations to implement sustainable conduct and policies in their daily activities and operations. This is crucial in terms of cultivating critical thinking in the tourism industry, which can introduce fresh perspectives on the subject of sustainable development. Hence, sustainable tourism development necessitates the preservation of the natural environment while simultaneously striving for human success and growth (Hall, 2019).

According to Dowson et al. (2019), people are becoming a combination of tourists and worshippers on a continuum. Heidari et al. (2018) suggest shifting from tourism in religious spaces to religious tourism and pilgrimage. The term “pilgrim” refers to a tourist who is motivated by spiritual or religious factors. According to the knowledge dynamics view, pilgrimage tourism can enhance the integration and transformation of rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge. Pilgrimages foster positive emotions and spiritual awareness, allowing pilgrims to view emotional and spiritual knowledge as a transformative and interactive process that enriches the experience and leads to new knowledge (Romanelli et al., 2021; Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2020).

Religious tourism facilitates the development of sustainable hospitality practices that involve the community and align with cultural management policies to meet tourists' expectations, thereby improving the local infrastructure (Gazzola et al., 2018). Furthermore, the digital age is supported by novel technologies and social media platforms, facilitating the co-creation of travel experiences and promoting sustainable religious tourism development, thereby empowering tourism agencies to establish a new brand image (Romanelli et al., 2021).

In summary, we have found various literatures on Religious Tourism, including Resources and Dimensions, Technology's Role and Satisfaction, examining Infrastructure, Marketing, and Sustainable Tourism in Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism. Please refer to Table 1 for additional information.

Table 1 – Topics identified and relevant authors

Topic	Topic identification	References
Religious Tourism	The Relationship between Tourism and Religion	Gazzola et al. (2019)
Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism	Marketing	Akroush et al. (2016), Hall (2019), Rashid (2018)
Religious Tourism	Satisfaction	Cànoves and Prat (2016)
Religious Tourism	Resources: <i>Sanctuaries, Religious sites with complex motives to visit, Religious festivals and anniversaries</i>	Dimitrov (2019)
Religious Tourism	Dimensions: <i>Spiritual experience, Contact, Satisfaction, Cognition, Self-confidence and Self-actualization, Cultural globalization, Awareness towards globalization, Modern information and communication techs, Individualism</i>	Meng et al. (2011)
Religious Tourism	Role of Technology	Duran-Sanchez (2018), Ozturk et al. (2021), Tabash et al. (2023)
Pilgrimage Tourism	The Benefits	Hall (2019), Rashid (2018)
Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism	Infrastructure	Iliev (2020), Kim et al. (2020), Štefko et al. (2015)
Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism	Sustainable Tourism Development	Bratianu and Bejinaru (2020), Dwivedi et al. (2009), Gazzola et al. (2019), Haq and Wong (2010), Petroman et al. (2011)

Source: Authors' Elaboration

3. Methodology

The data collection occurred through various stages. First, a search was conducted using the keywords “religious tourism”, and “Pilgrimage tourism” to find relevant documents for the research. In the second step, researchers identified the most useful databases, which included Scopus, Web of Science, and Science Direct, as the main academic databases.

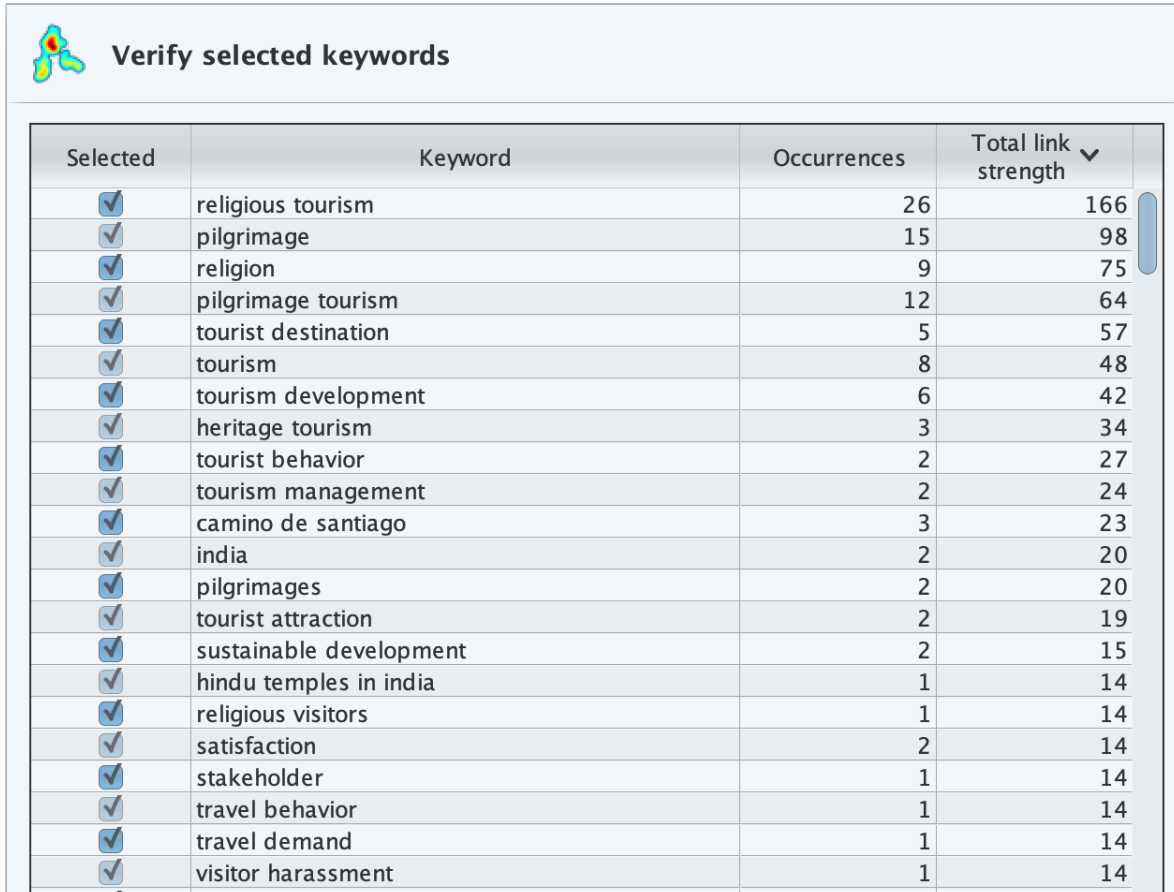
The search for potential document titles in these databases was based on the keywords identified in the first phase. Additionally, while searching, studies closely related to the research topic, but without specific keywords, have been gathered, which are vital for clarifying the concepts.

International academic activity is best represented by analysing only relevant journal articles and book chapters written in English. The search was carried out in September 2023 for the last time. If there are any studies related to current research objectives that were neglected, it was not intentional.

We also did a bibliometric analysis, using VOSviewer (please see the discussion below).

The other research technique is autoethnography. Autoethnography involves examining and reflecting on personal experiences through a cultural lens. In this research technique, the researcher employs both autobiography and ethnography, documenting and analysing their own experiences within larger social, cultural, and historical contexts. Through autoethnography, the researcher becomes both the subject and the researcher, blurring traditional boundaries between the observer and the observed. This methodology encourages self-reflection and self-awareness by recognizing that personal experiences are shaped by broader sociocultural factors. Autoethnography aims to understand an individual's subjective reality and shed light on cultural patterns. Autoethnography aims to produce knowledge that benefits both the researcher and the broader understanding of social and cultural phenomena. Autoethnographers seek to challenge dominant narratives, promote social change, and highlight marginalized voices through sharing personal stories and experiences.

Table 2 – A table created by VOSviewer of the keywords which most occurred using the search terms “Religious Tourism” AND “Pilgrimage Tourism” in Scopus



Verify selected keywords

Selected	Keyword	Occurrences	Total link strength
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	religious tourism	26	166
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	pilgrimage	15	98
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	religion	9	75
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	pilgrimage tourism	12	64
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	tourist destination	5	57
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	tourism	8	48
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	tourism development	6	42
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	heritage tourism	3	34
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	tourist behavior	2	27
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	tourism management	2	24
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	camino de santiago	3	23
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	india	2	20
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	pilgrimages	2	20
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	tourist attraction	2	19
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	sustainable development	2	15
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	hindu temples in india	1	14
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	religious visitors	1	14
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	satisfaction	2	14
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	stakeholder	1	14
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	travel behavior	1	14
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	travel demand	1	14
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	visitor harassment	1	14

Source: Authors' Elaboration

5. Autoethnographic accounts – Three perspectives on personal experiences

5.1 Autoethnographic account 1

The walk seemed never to end. It was raining hard. No point in using an umbrella. The wind was too strong. The rain was coming at us sideways, horizontal to the ground. We were in Spain, on the St James' Way, in June 2023. The hardship, however, paid off. We felt a cleansing of the soul during and after the walk – of around 30 km per day. What was also surprising is how people tend to be nicer during these pilgrimages. More tolerant of each other – more forgiving. It was interesting to see people in queues - peacefully and patiently - quite distant from the normal pushing

and shoving of everyday life. I had also seen this while in Fátima (Portugal), this last 12-13 May 2023 (the day of a very popular and renowned religious ceremony – the day of a religious sitting many decades ago). How people showed a deeper respect for each other. Is it the occasion that changes the people or perhaps different people come to these religious “events”? Perhaps we do meet and mingle with a different type of person during religious tourism. It is indeed heart-warming though. And gives us hope for humankind, after all. Despite the wars and the terrorism, which seem to never leave us feeling entirely safe. Roman Catholics are but a fraction of the world population. Albeit we may be seeing something positive by joining tourism plus religion – is it a unique combination? Leisure plus faith? I did arrive home from St. James’ Way very tired and with some minor aches and pains – but more hopeful for the future. What else could one desire from one’s holiday time?

5.2 Autoethnographic account 2

A pilgrimage is more than just travelling; it is a spiritual journey. It turns regular people into dedicated pilgrims who travel through tough terrain, overcoming physical and emotional obstacles to connect with the divine. Pilgrims invest significant time and effort to prepare themselves spiritually, mentally, and physically.

We meticulously design their itineraries, analysing maps, and holy scriptures, and seeking counsel from seasoned pilgrims. We all have a common goal that brings our lives together. Before embarking on the journey, we modify our routines, meditate, and participate in religious rituals to synchronize our hearts and minds. We submerge ourselves in the collective spirit, leaving behind our worldly identities. We unite as a community of seekers through shared activities, pilgrim blessings, and chants. Pilgrimages allow us to reflect, discover ourselves, and grow personally. During hard journeys, we experience moments of introspection and spiritual transcendence. We wish to be forgiven and rid ourselves of the heavy physical and emotional burdens that weigh down our souls.

A pilgrimage's conclusion marks the start of something new, not the end.

5.3 Autoethnographic account 3

Meteora. The dazzling jewel of Thessaly. A location that seems to have stopped in time. There is a pervasive magic surrounding anyone who enters this place. Upon viewing these imposing rock formations, atheist or not, no one can deny that there is a spirituality surrounding the area. And

when atop of them, you can savour the vastness of the valley facing persistently towards you and the serenity of the nearby monasteries to nest inside you. The roughened strokes of wind hitting the rocks are adding another striking touch to this already rugged landscape. Upon the first visit, the visitor will surely understand why this place has become a retreat for many people since the establishment of these temples. Strolling up in order to reach the monasteries, memories and nostalgia of a bygone era will definitely overwhelm you. And when entering them, you have a feeling that at every corner a different story will await you. Stories of people who have travelled a long way to reach this place, to lay down their troubles, and exchange their life agonies with peace of mind and tranquillity in their hearts. Stories of monks pleading for the salvation of their souls and of the one's that have passed by. And do not let this quiet that is confined here trick you. If you are careful enough, it will surely ear-pop you with whispers of prayers and holy chants that seemed to be “baked” within the very walls of each temple all over the eons. Whispers that will touch your own heart and find a refuge inside your spirit. So here dear wanderer rest your wand. Sleep the journey from your eyes. When the sunlight reflects its occasional twinkle upon this massive rock formation, a multitude of stories are being unfolded before your very eyes, adding another captivated touch to this breathtaking canvas of awe.

6. Conclusion

In this article we have attempted to focus on numerous related topics regarding religious tourism and pilgrimage tourism, which are growing in importance in modern society. We have focused on religious tourism, the relationship between tourism and religion, religious tourism marketing, tourist satisfaction in religious destinations, route-based pilgrimage as an important market in religious tourism, religious tourism resources, dimensions of religious tourism, the role of technology, the benefits of following the pilgrimage, religious tourism infrastructure, and religious tourism and pilgrimages as sources for sustainable tourism development. Additionally, Table 1 provides the topics identified and the relevant authors. We also provided a figure resulting from the use of VOSviewer – which shows some of the main keywords which most occurred using the search terms “Religious Tourism” AND “Pilgrimage Tourism” in Scopus. Finally, we have provided three autoethnographic accounts of touristic experiences, to enrich the narrative with more emotional content regarding what is known as the relationship industry. Relationships imply

the existence of emotions, as humans are emotional, especially regarding their interactions with others and with new environments.

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