

Religious Tourism information needs and Pilgrimage: Bibliometric Overview

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Abstract

This paper reviews the academic literature related to religious tourism through a bibliometric study and citations of articles indexed in the multidisciplinary database Web of Science (WoS). Through an advanced search by terms, a representative set of 103 documents that form the ad-hoc basis of the analysis were selected. In view of the results, it is concluded that the United States is at the forefront of research, with almost 20% of the articles affiliated to one of its centers, mainly university centers. Publications on religious tourism are currently in an exponential growth stage, supported by the annual increase in the number of citations received. These papers are published in a small number of journals well positioned in their JCR category, classified within the field of Social Sciences Research.

Keywords: religious; pilgrimage; bibliometric analysis; Web of Science; WoS

1. Introduction

Since ancient times, travelling for fervor and religious devotion purposes have been present in humanity. In this way, religious tourism starts from the moment people begin a journey due to a question of belief. It begins with a religious manifestation—the pilgrimage—where the pilgrim is

considered a tourist of religious motivation (Digance 2003; Turner 1973; Turner and Turner 1978).

In a broad sense, religious tourism is any trip motivated, either exclusively or partly, by religious reasons (Rinschede 1992). However, religious issues are not the only ones considered by visitors to religious sites or events, and their motivation is composed of religious, cultural, traditional, spiritual, and landscape patterns, which often interact in the intention and decision to set out on a trip (Abbate and Nuovo 2013; Amaro et al. 2018; Drule et al. 2015; Hughes et al. 2013; Kaewumpai 2018; Kim and Kim 2018; Olsen 2013; Terzidou et al. 2018; Wang et al. 2016). This means that, in the last decades, traditional pilgrimage destinations have also become tourist sites of multifunctional nature (Kaufman 2005) that welcome moved by their religious beliefs and those interested in their historical heritage or architectural, cultural, or artistic value (Hughes et al. 2013; Hyde and Harman 2011; Fernandes et al. 2012; Geary 2018; Musa et al. 2017; Ramírez and Fernández 2018; Shinde 2007). It is generally acknowledged that tourist motivation is multi-faceted; that is, tourists have multiple motives for travelling, even within a single journey (Bowen and Clarke 2009; Pearce 1993; Ryan 2002; Uriely et al. 2002).

Despite the worldwide trend toward secularization, in recent years, there has been a rediscovery of places and routes of a religious nature (Digance 2003). It is estimated that between 300 and 330 million people travel for religious reasons annually, generating an economic impact of about 18,000 million dollars (OMT 2014), representing a great opportunity for the development of many destinations.

As a growing phenomenon, and due to the dynamics it generates in the host communities, religious tourism has aroused interest among academics and businesspeople. For the former, the

interest lies in the study of the motivations, interests, and spiritual or cultural needs which religious centers seem to have aroused (Abbate and Nuovo 2013; Amaro et al. 2018; Raj 2012; among others), while for the latter, it represents opportunities for additional income and increased employment (Egresi et al. 2014; Olsen 2012; Raj and Griffin 2015; Shackley 2001; Simone-Charteris and Boyd 2010; Tobón and Tobón 2013; Vukonic 2002). When considering its recent relevance, it is necessary to compile and analyze the academic papers published in the last years whose subject deals with this type of tourism.

Bibliographic reviews were considered the first step for conducting scientific studies, whose objective is to reach a good understanding of the state of the art by synthesizing existing knowledge in a reproducible way (Tranfield et al. 2003; Glover et al. 2014). Although there are limitations in its methodology, this type of review provides a reasonably detailed description of the body of the research carried out within the topic analyzed.

2. Review of the Literature

Religiously motivated tourism is a worldwide phenomenon as old as religion itself and characteristic of all religious denominations (Lanczkowski 1982). Menhirs, burial mounds, and kromlecks (Stonehenge) had the same purpose as today's cathedrals, being religious centres that attracted believers from far and near (Roussel 1972).

The relationship between both terms, religion and tourism, has been studied from different perspectives (Collins-Kreiner 2010a, 2018; Terzidou et al. 2017). Bremer (2005) points out three approaches in which researchers place the intersections between religion and tourism: the spatial approach (pilgrims and tourists occupying the same space with different behaviors), the historical approach (relationship between religious forms of travel and tourism), and the cultural

approach (pilgrimage and tourism as modern practices in a post-modern world). However, for Millán-Vázquez de la Torre et al. (2016), their link can be considered from two angles: on the one hand, as tourism motivated exclusively or partially by religious reasons (traditional view) (Rinschede 1992), and on the other hand, considering tourism as a contemporary spiritual journey (Sharpley 2009).

Religious tourism is linked to other types of tourism, especially holiday, cultural, social, and group tourism, which causes it to be linked to seasonality (Collins-Kreiner 2018; Lois-González and Santos 2015; Olsen and Timothy 2006; Oviedo et al. 2014; Raj and Morpeth 2007; Raj et al. 2015; Rinschede 1992; Timothy and Boyd 2006). Historically, religious trips were always multifunctional trips, even when religious factors seemed to predominate. However, in modern societies, religious motivation seems to be less important than in ancient societies (Rinschede 1992).

One of the most debated issues among the authors that address this type of tourism is the distinction between tourists and pilgrims, both actors in the religious tourism industry. The pilgrimage has often been defined as “a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding” (Barber 1993, p. 1), what it supposes the journey of a religious devotee to a sacred religious site (Turner 1973; Turner and Turner 1978). Others, such as Collins-Kreiner (2010b) and Morinis (1992), define pilgrimage as a journey to a site that embodies the highly valued, the deeply meaningful, or a source of core identity for the traveler. According Hyde and Harman (Hyde and Harman 2011, p. 1343), in an increasingly secular world, many non-religious people undertake journeys to sites of deep personal meaning. Thus, secular pilgrimages include journeys to the gravesites and memorials of celebrities, famous sporting grounds, or sites of political significance (Digance

2006; Kaelber 2006; Margry 2008a; Morinis 1992; Olsen and Timothy 2006). In short, Hyde and Harman (Hyde and Harman 2011) say that the pilgrimage is not just a religious phenomenon, and the old paradigm of pilgrimage, predicated on religious elements, no longer holds (Collins-Kreiner 2010a, 2010b). In its place must be recognized two alternative forms of pilgrimage: the religious and the secular.

3. Methodology

This section includes the procedure followed for the preparation of the bibliometric study of the scientific production on religious tourism present in the WoS database. Bibliometric analysis consists of the application of statistical methods with the objective of evaluating the advances and improvements of the knowledge related to a specific topic as well as the scientific quality and the influence of different publications and sources (Bouyssou and Marchant 2011). In this way, useful information is provided for those academics and professionals who try to analyse and study more deeply this particular field of research, since the bibliometric analysis determines a series of significant indicators to measure the bibliographic material such as the number of publications, the most prolific authors, the countries where this field of research is more popular, or the journals that pay more attention to its publication. Another good indicator that is used to measure the influence of a researcher is the number of citations and the citations/articles relationship or h index (Hirsch 2005) that provides the measure of the impact of a publication in relation to its number of citations. The first step of the bibliometric analysis involves identifying the most useful databases for our study (Albort-Morant and Ribeiro-Soriano 2015). This work is based on the use of the Thomson Reuters Web of Science (WoS) database, considered one of the main documentary databases by researchers, providing research work in all disciplines with the highest quality standards (Merigó et al. 2015). In order to be able to delimit the results to the area

of religious tourism, we opted for a document tracking strategy by searching for terms whose equation is shown in Table 2. This form has the advantage of enabling to reach classified journals within all the thematic areas, therefore, considered more thorough (Corral and Canoves 2013). In addition, and following the outline of similar papers, in order to develop bibliometric indicators, only articles published in scientific journals are analysed because they constitute a representative sample of international scientific activity (Benavides-Velasco et al. 2011).

Once the documents were selected, the ad hoc database required to analyse each of the basic variables of the bibliometric indicators was developed. One of the main problems that we can find when carrying out the analysis of the documents indexed in the different databases is a lack of standardization of the records, which is why it is essential to carry out a standardization process. For the specific case of authors' names, the main criterion used for their homogenization was the coincidence in the ascription of the institutional signature associated with the different variants of the names and surnames (Pérez et al. 1999).

4. Results and Discussion

A publication on religious tourism in WoS appeared for the first time in 1968. From that moment, there has been a constant increase in the annual volume of studies, reaching the most significant figure in 2016 with 21 papers. As in other fields, the increase in publications in the last decade can be explained by two factors: first, the number of researchers around the world has increased exponentially, also increasing the number of submissions to journals, and second, the development of computers and the Internet that facilitates access to more updated information sources of each field (Merigó et al. 2015).

The Law of Price ensures that the growth of scientific information is exponential. However, each discipline undergoes its own evolution through various stages: precursors (first publications), exponential growth (becomes research focus), and linear growth (growth slows down, review and archive of knowledge) (Price 1956). Based on what is observed in studies on religious tourism are in the exponential growth stage, adjusting the cumulative production function to an exponential equation with $R^2 = 0.8649$. With regard to the number of citations that the articles indexed in WoS have received, an increase over time is observed, exceeding the threshold of 200 in 2016. 2.9% (3) of the articles get more than 50 citations, 10.7% (11) between 25–50 citations, 11.7% (12) between 10–25 citations, and 39.8% (41) between 1–10 citations. Only 36 of them, 35%, do not receive any citations. In the citation analysis, it should be taken into account that articles published over the last 10 years still do not show their maximum citation level and that access to the first studies is not always available to all, so they have a limited number of readers (Merigó et al. 2015). The Law of Price ensures that the growth of scientific information is exponential. However, each discipline undergoes its own evolution through various stages: precursors (first publications), exponential growth (becomes research focus), and linear growth (growth slows down, review and archive of knowledge) (Price 1956). Based on what is observed, studies on religious tourism are in the exponential growth stage, adjusting the cumulative production function to an exponential equation with $R^2 = 0.8649$. With regard to the number of citations that the articles indexed in WoS have received, an increase over time is observed, exceeding the threshold of 200 in 2016. 2.9% (3) of the articles get more than 50 citations, 10.7% (11) between 25–50 citations, 11.7% (12) between 10–25 citations, and 39.8% (40) between 1–10 citations. Only 36 of them, 35%, do not receive any citations. In the citation analysis, it should be taken into account that articles published over the last 10 years still do not

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Author productivity (both primary and secondary) is calculated based on the number of articles published by each of them. Following the criteria proposed by Lotka (1926), they are classified into: small producers (authors with only one published article), medium producers (authors with between two and nine published articles) and large producers (authors with 10 or more published articles). Within the tourism form of religious tourism, and based on articles located in WoS, there are no authors considered as large producers. Collins-Kreiner, N. appears as the top author in the productivity ranking with six authorships. Only four other authors have written more than one article: Shinde, K, A. with three and Aukland, K., Cusack, CM, and Ryan, C. with two. In this way, and following Lotka, 2.73% of the authors are medium producers (5), while the remaining 97.27% (178) are considered small producers by having only one published article. This fact causes the average productivity per author (number of works published per author) to be 1.05. By the number of citations received, we find Collins-Kreimer, N. again in the top position of the ranking with a total of 71 citations in six published articles. In addition, we must mention Ryan, C.; despite his low productivity, the average number of citations of his two articles is the highest (18.5).

5. Conclusion

This study illustrates the usefulness of bibliometric reviews of academic literature, not only as an instrument capable of identifying and classifying a wide variety of documents within a specific area of study but also to analyze existing information in order to show trends based on synthesized data. Based on the analysis of the selection of documents indexed in the main

database of WoS, we can deduce a number of ideas that can help future researchers in the field of religious tourism. The first publication of an academic paper related to Religious Tourism occurred at the end of the 1960s. Since then, the publication of articles has experienced an exponential growth at international level, supported by the annual increase in the number of citations received, an area in which *Forms of Religious Tourism* (Rinschede 1992) stands out with more than 135 citations. Within the form of religious tourism, and based on the articles located in WoS, there are no authors considered as large producers, and almost 98% of them are classified as small producers because they have only one published work, which leads to a productivity index of close to 1. One country stands at the forefront of research on religious tourism, the United States, since almost 20% of the articles belong to one of its centres, mainly universities. In relation to the authorship of scientific production (collaboration index), the total number of articles with multiple authorship is close to the sum of articles by a single author, as those by two authors are the articles that receive a higher average number of citations.

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