Chapter 1

Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage: Study of Academic Publications in Scopus

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is an economic activity capable of promoting the development of regions, creating wealth and contributing to the preservation of heritage. Thus, the tourism sector in general, and in particular, the new typologies of tourism that take advantage of cultural resources, such as religious tourism, have in recent years become the focus of attention by economic, political and scientific agents. Religious tourism started the moment man began to move due to a question of belief, that is to say, with a religious manifestation, the pilgrimage, being a pilgrim a tourist with religious motivation. Currently, according to UNWTO estimates, between 300 and 330 million tourists visit the main religious sites every year. Taking into account the increasing interest in the subject of religious tourism and pilgrimage, a review of the academic literature on this type of tourism is carried out in this chapter by means of a descriptive bibliometric study of articles, books and of book chapters included in the multidisciplinary Scopus (Elsevier) database until the year 2016. Thus, through an advanced search for terms, we selected a representative set of 199 documents that form the ad-hoc base of the analysis. In view of the results, it is concluded that despite an uncertain start at the beginning of the 80s, from the year 2006 the interest for this discipline experiences a rapid growth with more than 80% of the work published during the 2006-2016 period. When publishing, the authors opt for specialized journals in the tourism sector in the areas of Social Sciences and Business, Management and Accounting or Arts and Humanities.

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INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, journeys due to religious fervour and devotion have been present in humanity. Religious Tourism begins from the moment man starts to travel due to a question of belief, starting with a religious manifestation - the pilgrimage - being a pilgrim a tourist of religious motivation.

Currently, the diversification of the tourist offers, due to variations in the demand tastes and changing holiday habits, has led to the massive consumption of nature, culture and religiousness, in its recreational and tourist forms. Religious tourism is composed of religious, cultural, traditional, spiritual and landscape patterns that often interact in the intention and decision to undertake the trip. In the last decades, traditional pilgrimage destinations have become multifunctional tourist places that welcome both pilgrims and tourists, whose motivations and expectations can be radically different.

As an economic activity, religious tourism has proven its effectiveness as a development engine in regions due to its ability to create wealth, jobs and contribute to the preservation of heritage. A significant amount of historical, cultural or artistic heritage visited by tourists is of a religious nature, which means that not only do those people with some kind of religious belief go on a pilgrimage to these enclaves, but also people interested in their architectural and cultural value. Thus, religious tourism is on the increase, according to UNWTO estimates, between 300 and 330 million tourists visit the main religious sites each year, making religious tourism a significant part of national and international tourism (UNWTO, 2014). For example, journeys related to religious pilgrimage and cultural tourism of religious heritage is one of the most popular products in Europe (Nolan & Nolan, 1992).

As both a social and economic phenomenon, religious tourism has attracted the interest of academics and entrepreneurs due to the dynamics it has generated in host communities. For academics, the interest lies in the study of the motivations, interests and spiritual or cultural needs that religious centres seem to have awakened; for entrepreneurs, it represents an economic impact and additional income opportunities generated by visitors, creating new business initiatives and income and employment sources (Tobón & Tobón, 2013). This fact makes it necessary to compile and analyse the academic work published on religious tourism in recent years.

Thus, the main objective of this paper is to present an in-depth analysis of the current state of research related to this tourist typology through its bibliometric study. Thus, the characteristics of existing scientific literature are analysed by using mathematical and statistical methods, i.e. how much, where, when, who, how and what has been published.

In order to develop a bibliometric analysis in any area of knowledge, the first step is to assess the available databases, their suitability and the consequences of using one or another. The validity of the work will depend on its correct choice, since it must cover the field under study sufficiently (Bordons & Zulueta, 1999). In order to reach the proposed objectives, the documents published in journals indexed within the multidisciplinary database Scopus (Elsevier) have been reviewed, which provides a general overview of international research output, considered a suitable instrument for the approach to bibliometric studies. A set of 199 documents including articles, books and book chapters that constitute the empirical base of the study were selected through an advanced search for terms with a time limit in 2016, and which were later processed using the bibliographic manager Refworks.

This chapter is structured in four main sections. In the first place, and after this introduction, a review of the literature is conducted, whose aim is to establish the theoretical framework of research related to the field of religious tourism. A second point describes both the database and the methodological process used to obtain the references that constitute the essence of our study. Subsequently, in the third