Thai Arts and Culture Review

Original Research Article

RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY: NAVIGATING TRANSFORMATION, AUTHENTICITY, AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE (2001-2025)

Krit PHANPANYA[1], Nasipat CHANCHAIPITIPHAT[2], Sopa BOONMUN[3] and Vinay KUMAR[4]

    1 Faculty of Hospitality Industry, Kasetsart University, Thailand; krit.ph@ku.th
    2 Faculty of Political Science, North Bangkok University, Thailand; 681500089@northbkk.ac.th
    3 White Tiger Travel Co., Ltd., Thailand; koypin@hotmail.com
    4 Lotus & Gems Travels, India; lotusgems_tours@yahoo.com

Abstract

This comprehensive review examines the dynamic evolution of religious tourism during the first quarter of the 21st century (2001-2025), a period marked by significant growth, unprecedented challenges, and transformative adaptations. Employing a multidisciplinary approach and robust secondary literature review, the study analyzes religious travel through economic, marketing, socio-cultural, governance, and sustainability lenses. The pre-COVID-19 era saw substantial expansion, while the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022) served as a critical turning point, profoundly disrupting traditional practices and catalyzing innovations such as virtual pilgrimages. The post-pandemic landscape (2023-2025) reveals a heightened demand for authentic, meaningful, and spiritual journeys, coupled with an intensified focus on sustainable and responsible management. Key findings highlight the inherent tension between the sacred and the commercial, and the imperative to balance economic development with cultural heritage preservation and environmental stewardship. The article underscores religious tourism's resilience, its capacity for technological integration, and the complex interplay among diverse stakeholder interests. Offering critical insights for academics and practitioners, this review emphasizes balanced strategies that uphold authenticity, promote sustainability, and adapt to changing global dynamics, particularly within the context of arts and cultural heritage.
Keywords: Religious Tourism, Pilgrimage, COVID-19 Impact, Cultural Heritage, Sustainable Tourism

Introduction

Religious tourism is among humanity's most ancient forms of travel, rooted in pilgrimage and journeys to sacred sites dating back to antiquity (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). However, in the early 21st century, religious tourism has evolved into a more complex and multifaceted phenomenon, inextricably linking religious, cultural, economic, and social elements. Research in religious tourism has seen a dramatic surge in interest over the past two decades, particularly since 2010, reflecting the growing academic importance of this field (Raj & Griffin, 2015; Shinde & Olsen, 2020).

The growth of religious tourism in the first two decades of the 21st century has been remarkable across multiple dimensions. Studies indicate a continuous increase in the number of pilgrims and religious tourists, alongside the development of new pilgrimage routes and hybrid tourism models blending religious and cultural motivations (Timothy & Olsen, 2006; Raj & Griffin, 2015). Furthermore, religious tourism plays a significant economic role, generating income for local communities, creating employment, and stimulating infrastructure development (Tabash et al., 2023). Nevertheless, this growth also brings various challenges, particularly concerning sustainability, cultural heritage preservation, and the inherent tension between the sacred and commercial aspects.

The most significant turning point for religious tourism in the 21st century was the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely impacted the global tourism industry, including religious tourism. Border closures, the cancellation of large religious events, and social distancing measures compelled various sectors to adapt and find new ways to maintain connections between people and sacred sites (Raj & Griffin, 2020; Mróz, 2021). This situation spurred technological innovations such as virtual pilgrimages, live-streamed rituals, and the use of digital media for religious communication, permanently altering the landscape of religious tourism.

This research article aims to provide a fundamental understanding of religious tourism and to highlight its status and trends during the first quarter of the 21st century (2001-2025) across multiple dimensions. These include economic and business aspects, marketing and destination branding, socio-cultural dimensions and identity, management and governance, and sustainability and heritage preservation. This study employs a desk research methodology, involving a comprehensive review of secondary data from books, research reports, and academic journal articles published between 2001 and 2025, presented in a descriptive analytical format.

The conceptual framework for this review and analysis consists of three key components. First, a temporal analysis categorizes the period into three distinct phases: the pre-COVID-19 era (2001-2019), characterized by continuous growth and development; the intra-COVID-19 period (2020-2022), marked by crisis and adaptation; and the post-COVID-19 era (2023-2025), which involves recovery and paradigm shifts (De Oliveira, 2024). Second, a multidisciplinary analysis comprehensively examines various dimensions to foster a profound understanding of the religious tourism phenomenon. Third, a consideration of diverse stakeholder perspectives, including academics, operators, religious authorities, tourists, and policymakers, is undertaken to achieve a balanced and holistic view of this phenomenon.

Foundational Understanding of Religious Tourism: Between the Sacred and the Modern Worldview

Religious tourism is a complex and highly debated concept within academia regarding its true scope and definition. Over the past two decades, research has sought to conceptualize it more clearly, defining religious tourism as a comprehensive travel modality encompassing journeys driven by genuine religious motivations, as well as those primarily motivated by cultural interest and general tourism, but whose destinations are sacred sites or places with religious

significance (Shinde & Olsen, 2020). The challenge in its definition stems from the evolving roles and motivations of modern travelers, who often have mixed motivations that combine spiritual needs, cultural interests, and general tourist experiences.

A central point of debate in the literature concerns the distinction and overlap between "pilgrimage" and "religious tourism." Classic research by Smith (1992) proposed the Pilgrimage-Tourism Continuum, positioning travelers' motivations along a spectrum with purely religiously motivated pilgrims at one end and genuinely secular tourists at the other. However, more recent research indicates that most individuals have mixed motivations. This is particularly true in the postmodern context, where the boundaries between the sacred and the secular worldview have become increasingly blurred (Timothy & Olsen, 2006; Collins-Kreiner, 2010). Olsen's (2013) study of pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago found that most travelers have complex motivations, encompassing spiritual dimensions, a search for meaning in life, cultural and historical interests, and a desire for recreational experiences.

Examining religious tourism within the context of major world religions reveals distinct characteristics and prominent destinations for each. In Christianity, key destinations include Santiago de Compostela in Spain, one of Europe's oldest and most popular pilgrimage routes; Lourdes in France, which attracts millions of visitors annually; and Vatican City, the spiritual heart of Roman Catholicism (Raj & Griffin, 2020; Mróz, 2021). Christian religious tourism exhibits diversity in travel modes, ranging from traditional walking pilgrimages to modern forms such as cycling and contemporary vehicle travel.

For Islam, the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, a duty for all able-bodied Muslims to undertake at least once in their lifetime. Additionally, Umrah, a minor pilgrimage, can be performed throughout the year (Almuhrzi & Alsawafi, 2017). Islamic religious tourism has expanded significantly over the past two decades, particularly with the rise of Halal Tourism, or Muslim-friendly tourism, which has gained popularity in both Muslim-majority countries and in countries seeking to attract Muslim visitors (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Other significant pilgrimage sites include Arbaeen in Iraq, one of the world's largest religious gatherings, and visits to prominent mosques and shrines of saints in various countries.

Buddhism exhibits fascinating geographical diversity. Religious tourism in South Asia often focuses on archaeological sites associated with the Buddha, such as Bodh Gaya in India, where he attained enlightenment, and Lumbini in Nepal, his birthplace. In Southeast Asia, religious tourism is frequently intertwined with living cultural landscapes, where Buddhism remains integral to daily life (Andriotis, 2009). A notable example is the Monk Chat program in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where tourists can engage in conversations with monks to learn about Thai Buddhism and culture (Schedneck, 2018). This blend of tourism and religious education highlights the complexity and diversity of religious tourism within the Buddhist context.

For Hinduism, pilgrimage is a cornerstone of religious practice. Numerous significant destinations exist, including the sacred Ganges River and holy cities such as Varanasi, Haridwar, and Rishikesh. Grand religious festivals, such as the Kumbh Mela, held every 12 years, attract tens of millions of participants, making them among the largest human gatherings globally (Maclean, 2008). Religious tourism in Hinduism is deeply intertwined with the concept of Tirtha, sacred places believed to serve as conduits between the human and divine realms.

The motivations and experiences of religious tourists constitute another crucial dimension that has been extensively studied. Research by Carvache-Franco et al. (2024) investigating pilgrims' motivations in Peru identified six primary clusters: Religious Experience (seeking spiritual peace and proximity to God), Belief Experience (expression of faith), Tourism and Escape (desire for relaxation and escape from daily life), Cultural and Heritage (interest in history and culture), Pilgrimage Motives (fulfilling religious duties), and Shopping and Economic

(purchasing souvenirs and religious items). This study reflects the complexity of motivations, which are often not singular but a blend of multiple factors.

Experiences from religious tourism have significant impacts on travelers' well-being. Hassan et al. (2023) proposed a concept of Spiritual Well-being comprising six dimensions: Physical, Spiritual, Emotional, Social, Intellectual, and Financial. Religious tourism can positively influence all these dimensions, particularly in terms of positive transformation and personal growth. Numerous studies indicate that pilgrims and religious tourists report transformative experiences, feelings of connection with religious communities, and strengthened religious identity (Norman & Johnson, 2011).

The State and Trends of Religious Tourism 2001-2025: Navigating a Storm of Transformation

Religious tourism in the first quarter of the 21st century has undergone several significant transformations, which can be clearly categorized into three distinct periods. The pre-COVID-19 era (2001-2019) was characterized by continuous growth and the development of new forms of religious travel. A study by Mróz (2019) on religious tourism in Poland revealed stable growth in the number of pilgrims and tourists visiting sacred sites in the early 21st century. Statistics indicated positive trends across nearly all key destinations, particularly major pilgrimage centers such as Jasna Góra in Częstochowa, which receives millions of visitors annually. During this period, there was an extensive development of pilgrimage centers and routes, especially in Europe, with the restoration of ancient pilgrimage paths and the creation of new routes connecting sacred sites.

The forms of religious tourism prior to COVID-19 significantly diversified. Beyond traditional pilgrimages, new modalities emerged, including bicycle pilgrimages, marathons along pilgrimage routes, Nordic Walking, and even kayak and ski pilgrimages (Mróz, 2019). This diversification reflected religious tourism's adaptation to meet the varied demands of a broader demographic, particularly younger generations seeking to integrate spiritual experiences with outdoor activities and physical exercise. Furthermore, there was a growing popularity of stays at temples, monasteries, and meditation centers, offering deeper and more intimate engagement with religious life than single-day visits. Weekend religious tourism also became a notable trend, especially among urban dwellers seeking spaces for reflection and contemplation.

However, this period of growth also presented challenges, particularly concerning the commodification of religious tourism. This issue has been widely debated in academic circles, with concerns that commercialization might diminish the sacredness and spiritual meaning of pilgrimage sites (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). The development of infrastructure to accommodate tourists, the sale of souvenirs, and the creation of commercial tour packages created tension between those aiming to preserve religious purity and those recognizing economic opportunities. While religious festivals and annual temple fairs became significant tourist attractions, they also raised questions about authenticity and their impact on local communities (Di Giovine, 2009).

The COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022 had a severe and unprecedented impact on global tourism, including religious tourism. A study by Mróz (2021) on the effects of COVID-19 on pilgrimage and religious tourism in Europe during the first six months of the pandemic found a 90-95% reduction in pilgrimage travel. Key sacred sites such as Santiago de Compostela and Lourdes were temporarily closed, affecting both pilgrims and local economies reliant on tourism. The study also noted shifts in the demographic structure of pilgrims, with the elderly (aged 60 and above), who previously formed a large segment, significantly decreasing due to health risks.

Large pilgrimages and religious events became major public health concerns. Research by Ebrahim & Memish (2020) highlighted the high risk of virus transmission at large religious

gatherings. A clear example was the Hajj in 2020 and 2021, where Saudi Arabia drastically limited participant numbers to only tens of thousands, compared to the usual two million (Hashim et al., 2021). This situation compelled many countries and religious institutions to devise new methods to maintain religious connections with people without requiring actual travel.

The most significant adaptation during COVID-19 was the emergence of virtual pilgrimages and the live streaming of religious rituals via online platforms. Many sacred sites developed virtual experiences, allowing people to "visit" holy places from home (Raj & Griffin, 2020). However, research by Buzinde & Manuel-Navarrete (2013) highlighted significant limitations of virtual pilgrimages, particularly their negative impacts on socio-cultural activities and on local economies reliant on pilgrims. Furthermore, questions regarding the authenticity of virtual experiences arose, as they cannot fully replace the physical and emotional engagement of actual pilgrimages.

The post-COVID-19 era (2023-2025) is a period of recovery and paradigm shifts. A study by De Oliveira et al. (2024) proposed the "Rethink, Rebuild, Restart" framework for post-COVID-19 religious tourism development, emphasizing the importance of building supply chain resilience, developing appropriate management strategies, and leveraging technology to enhance experiences while maintaining hygiene measures. Many sacred sites adopted advanced booking systems and limited visitor numbers to manage visitor flow. While initially implemented out of public health necessity, these measures have been recognized as valuable tools for managing overtourism, a problem that existed pre-COVID-19.

Post-COVID-19 religious tourism features a hybrid blend of physical and digital experiences. Many sacred sites have developed strategies that integrate welcoming in-person pilgrims with providing online services for those unable to travel (Tran & Davies, 2024). This trend reflects a permanent shift in the religious tourism landscape, with digital technology continuing to play a significant role even after travel returns to normalcy. There is an increased demand for authentic and spiritually meaningful experiences, with people becoming more attentive to the quality of experiences rather than the quantity of visited sites (Bideci & Bideci, 2024). This trend aligns with the growing popularity of concepts like Slow Tourism and Meaningful Travel in the post-COVID-19 world.

Multidimensional Analysis of Religious Tourism: An Interdisciplinary Perspective for Deeper Understanding

Religious tourism is a complex phenomenon that necessitates analysis from multiple dimensions to achieve a comprehensive understanding. The economic and business dimension is among the most critical, as religious tourism profoundly impacts both local and national economies. A study by Tabash et al. (2023) on the economic effects of religious tourism in Saudi Arabia found a positive correlation between religious tourism and economic growth, infrastructure development, and job creation. However, the same study also identified negative environmental impacts, particularly concerning increased energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, which rise with the number of religious tourists. This complexity underscores the imperative to balance economic development with environmental sustainability.

At the local community level, the economic impacts are diverse and intricate. A study by Nyaupane et al. (2015) on local perceptions of the economic impacts of religious tourism in Zimbabwe found that communities generally perceive positive economic effects, particularly job creation, increased income, and business opportunities. Nevertheless, the study also underscored inequities in benefit distribution, where individuals with greater capital and skills often benefit more than average community members. Business models emerging around sacred sites range from small-scale family enterprises, such as souvenir shops, restaurants, and

accommodation providers, to large-scale businesses involved in infrastructure development and comprehensive service provision.

Business innovations in religious tourism have advanced significantly in recent years, notably with the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to create personalized recommendation systems for individual religious tourists. These systems can customize services based on religious requirements, such as prayer times, availability of Halal food, or religiously appropriate accommodation (Battour & Ismail, 2016). The rise of Halal Tourism, or Muslim-friendly tourism, has generated numerous new business opportunities, particularly in countries aiming to attract Muslim visitors, which constitute a large and rapidly growing market.

The dimension of marketing and destination branding has also garnered increased attention. A study by Li et al. (2024) on the role of religion in shaping city brand personality revealed that religious elements can profoundly influence destination perceptions and image through stakeholder engagement. Successful religious destination branding necessitates balancing the promotion of religious values with the attraction of a diverse range of tourists. A compelling example is Borobudur in Indonesia, which has been branded as a "World Spiritual Tourism Destination" utilizing semiotics to communicate its spiritual and cultural significance (Latifah, 2024).

Spiritual Marketing has emerged as a crucial strategy for religious destinations, emphasizing not only the physical attributes of a site but also the spiritual experiences and personal transformations that visitors can undergo. However, a significant challenge lies in maintaining authenticity while marketing, as over-commodification can lead to a loss of genuine spiritual value. This tension is evident in numerous case studies, such as tourism in Pompeii, Italy, which must balance the promotion of cultural heritage and religion to sustain tourism (Cortese et al., 2019).

The socio-cultural and identity dimension is another critical and complex aspect. Religious tourism plays a vital role in constructing and reinforcing religious and cultural identity. A study by Wardhani et al. (2023) on community-based tourism development in Kampung Wisata Purbayan, Indonesia, found that religious tourism can foster community solidarity and preserve religious values and socio-cultural identity when appropriately managed. Nevertheless, the study also highlighted the necessity of balancing the preservation of traditional ways of life with the need to adapt to accommodate tourists.

The tension between reverence and commodification is a widely debated issue in the literature. A study by Poria et al. (2003) on tourists' perceptions of religious heritage sites found that visitors with a religious connection to a place have different expectations and needs compared to general tourists, seeking profound experiences and respect for the site's sacredness. The challenge for site managers is to create experiences that cater to both groups without compromising core values. Interpretation and education are crucial tools for bridging this gap, as providing knowledge of religious and cultural meanings can enhance understanding and respect among tourists from diverse religious backgrounds.

The dimensions of management and governance are critical factors in determining the success of religious tourism. A study by Siregar & Iskandar (2025) on communication and stakeholder management strategies at Pura Parahyangan Agung Jagatkarta in Indonesia presented a Pentahelix model involving five key stakeholder groups: government, academia, local communities, businesses, and media. Effective coordination among these stakeholders is crucial for sustainable development. However, a common challenge is the lack of coordination and conflicts of interest among various groups, particularly between those seeking to preserve sacredness and those focused on economic development.

Participatory governance frameworks have gained increasing recognition in the management of religious tourism sites. This approach emphasizes providing all stakeholder groups a voice

in decision-making, including local communities, religious leaders, and tourism operators. Aas et al.'s (2005) study on stakeholder participation in tourism indicated that genuine participation must go beyond mere consultation to include shared power and joint decision-making, a component often lacking in many contexts.

The dimension of sustainability and heritage preservation has attracted significant attention in recent years. A study by Sampieri & Bagader (2024) on sustainable tourism development in Jeddah, which focuses on protecting cultural heritage while promoting tourism, highlights the challenge of balancing conservation and development. Overtourism, an issue in which excessive visitor numbers threaten the sustainability of many sacred sites, is particularly critical at popular destinations like Vatican City and Angkor Wat, which frequently face visitor numbers exceeding capacity.

Sustainable approaches must consider environmental, social, and economic dimensions. A study by Dredge et al. (2018) introduced the concept of Carrying Capacity and the need to manage visitor numbers to prevent damage to both physical resources and visitor experiences. Measures implemented include booking systems, seasonal pricing, and dispersing visitors to alternative, related sites. Religious values and environmental consciousness are deeply interconnected. Research by Ryndach et al. (2024) posited religious tourism as a moral foundation for ecological preservation in the region, suggesting that religious teachings advocating stewardship of creation can serve as powerful motivators for environmentally friendly behavior.

Reflection and Future Directions: Lessons from the First Quarter and Opportunities Ahead

This comprehensive literature review of religious tourism in the first quarter of the 21st century reveals a complex, continually evolving phenomenon. The most prominent highlight is the significant transformation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, which not only caused short-term disruptions but also spurred structural changes that may persist in the long term. The emergence of virtual pilgrimages and the use of digital technologies for religious communication were innovations born out of necessity, yet they have become integral to the new landscape of religious tourism (Raj & Griffin, 2020; Mróz, 2021). However, various studies indicate that virtual experiences cannot fully replace the meaning, value, and physical engagement inherent in a journey to a sacred site.

The multidimensional analysis underscores the delicate balance that must be maintained. In the economic dimension, religious tourism plays a significant role in generating revenue and fostering local economic development, but it also presents challenges related to equitable benefit distribution and environmental impacts (Nyaupane et al., 2015; Tabash et al., 2023). Within the socio-cultural dimension, religious tourism can strengthen religious and cultural identity, yet it risks commodification and the loss of authenticity. In terms of management, success hinges on effective coordination among diverse stakeholders. For the sustainability dimension, the challenge lies in balancing development with conservation.

From the perspective of various stakeholders, several critical considerations emerge. For academics, while research has expanded significantly over the past two decades, particularly since 2010, crucial gaps remain. These include the need for more studies on less-researched religions such as Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, compared to Christianity and Islam (Shinde & Olsen, 2020). Furthermore, long-term studies on the impacts of COVID-19 and on recovery processes, as well as truly interdisciplinary research integrating multiple perspectives, remain lacking. For business operators and executives, significant opportunities lie in leveraging new technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), to personalize services and enhance tourist experiences (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Developing niche products tailored to

specific group needs, such as Halal Tourism for Muslim travelers, also presents a substantial business opportunity.

For religious authorities, the primary challenge is to balance their sacred role with the demands of tourism, manage the diverse expectations of pilgrims and general tourists, and preserve the sanctity of sites while accommodating large visitor numbers (Poria et al., 2003). Developing clear guidelines for appropriate behavior, dress codes, and ritual participation is crucial. Additionally, establishing high-quality interpretation and educational programs can enhance visitor understanding and respect. For religious tourists, a growing trend is the demand for meaningful, personalized experiences, a quest for authenticity, and a deep interest in learning about religious traditions and cultures. Modern tourists are increasingly informed and concerned about the impacts of their travel on local communities and the environment.

For government policymakers, the main responsibility lies in developing policy frameworks that support sustainable religious tourism development. This includes establishing appropriate infrastructure, setting service standards, fostering public-private collaboration, and protecting cultural and religious heritage (Aas et al., 2005). Policies must judiciously balance economic opportunities with the imperative to preserve the sacredness and cultural values of destinations. Recommendations for future research are manifold: First, long-term studies are needed to assess the enduring impacts of COVID-19 on religious tourists' behavior and attitudes, particularly regarding permanent changes versus a return to pre-pandemic norms. Second, in-depth research into the application of emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and the Metaverse, to religious tourism is essential. Third, cross-religious and cross-cultural comparative studies can provide deeper insights into the commonalities and differences in religious travel. Fourth, research on sustainability and carrying capacity management at sacred sites remains urgent. Fifth, the roles of gender and diversity in religious tourism are still under-researched.

Policy and practical recommendations include developing participatory governance frameworks that involve all stakeholder groups, fostering collaboration among religious site owners, local communities, and businesses, and implementing robust sustainability measures and overtourism management plans. Investing in technology to enhance experiences without compromising authenticity and promoting education and interpretation to deepen understanding of religious heritage values are also crucial (Dredge et al., 2018; Siregar & Iskandar, 2025). Ultimately, religious tourism is a complex and diverse phenomenon intertwining religion, culture, economy, and society. Its future success will depend on the ability to balance these varied needs: preserving sacredness, fostering economic development, protecting the environment, and meeting visitor expectations. The COVID-19 pandemic has permanently altered the landscape, underscoring the critical importance of resilience, innovation, and sustainability in the future development of religious tourism.

References

Aas, C., Ladkin, A., & Fletcher, J. (2005). Stakeholder collaboration and heritage management. *Annals of Tourism Research, 32*(1), 28-48.

Almuhrzi, H., & Alsawafi, A. (2017). Muslim perspectives on spiritual and religious travel beyond Hajj: Toward understanding motivations for Umrah travel in Oman. *Tourism Management Perspectives, 24*, 235-242.

Andriotis, K. (2009). Sacred site experience: A phenomenological study. *Annals of Tourism Research, 36*(1), 64-84.

Battour, M., & Ismail, M. (2016). Halal tourism: Concepts, practises, challenges and future. *Tourism Management Perspectives, 19*(B), 150-154.

Bideci, M., & Bideci, C. (2024). Moving Pilgrimage into the Virtual Realm: Understanding the Advantages and Complexities of Immersive Technologies. In D. Liutikas & R. Raj

(eds.). *Religious Tourism and Globalization: The Search for Identity and Transformative Experience* (pp. 82-93). Oxfordshire: CABI.

Buzinde, C., & Manuel-Navarrete, D. (2013). The social production of space in tourism enclaves: Mayan children's perceptions of tourism boundaries. *Annals of Tourism Research, 43*, 482-505.

Carvache-Franco, M., Regalado-Pezúa, O., Carvache-Franco, O., & Carvache-Franco, W. (2024). Segmentation by motivations in religious tourism: A study of the Christ of Miracles Pilgrimage, Peru. *PLOS ONE, 19*(5), e0303762.

Collins-Kreiner, N. (2010). Researching pilgrimage: Continuity and transformations. *Annals of Tourism Research, 37*(2), 440-456.

Cortese, F., D'Ambrosio, I., & Petracca, M. (2019). A possible synergy between culture and religion for the sustainability of tourism of Pompeii. *Sustainability, 11*, 2231.

De Oliveira, P., Tells, R., Junior, R., Santos, P., de Oliveira, W., & Martins, C. (2024). The impact of COVID-19 on religious tourism: An approach through institutional logics in Aparecida do Norte - SP. *RGSA - Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental, 18*(3), e08671.

Di Giovine, M. (2009). *The heritage-scape: UNESCO, world heritage, and tourism.* Maryland: Lexington Books.

Dredge, D., Phi, G., Mahadevan, R., Meehan, E., & Popescu, E. (2018). *Digitalisation in tourism: In-depth analysis of challenges and opportunities.* Copenhagen: Aalborg University.

Ebrahim, S., & Memish, Z. (2020). COVID-19 - the role of mass gatherings. *Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease, 34*, 101617.

Hashim, H., Babar, M., Essar, M., Ramadhan, M., & Ahmad, S. (2021). The Hajj and COVID-19: How the pandemic shaped the world's largest religious gathering. *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, 104*(3), 797-799.

Hassan, S., Ramayah, T., & Qureshi, M. (2023). Elucidating well-being measurement from the wellness perspective of religious travelers. *World, 4*(1), 171-184.

Latifah. (2024). A semiotic branding analysis of Borobudur: World spiritual tourism destination. *Journal of Humanity and Social Justice, 6*(1), 60-76.

Li, X., Alahmari, A., & Schivinski, B. (2024). Place branding: Religion in shaping the three-dimensional essence of a city brand through stakeholder engagement. *PLOS ONE, 19*(1), e0296162.

Maclean, K. (2008). *Pilgrimage and power: The Kumbh Mela in Allahabad, 1765-1954.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mróz, F. (2019). Changes in religious tourism in Poland at the beginning of the 21st century. *Tourism, 29*(2), 95-103.

Mróz, F. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on pilgrimages and religious tourism in Europe during the first six months of the pandemic. *Journal of Religion and Health, 60*, 625-645.

Norman, A., & Johnson, M. (2011). World youth day: The creation of a modern pilgrimage event for evangelical intent. *Journal of Contemporary Religion, 26*(3), 371-385.

Nyaupane, G., Timothy, D., & Poudel, S. (2015). Understanding tourists in religious destinations: A social distance perspective. *Tourism Management, 48*, 343-353.

Olsen, D. (2013). A scalar comparison of motivations and expectations of experience within the religious tourism market. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage, 1*(1), 5.

Poria, Y., Butler, R., & Airey, D. (2003). The core of heritage tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 30*(1), 238-254.

Raj, R. & Griffin, K. (2020). Reflecting on the impact of COVID-19 on religious tourism and pilgrimage. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage, 8*(7), 1-6.

Raj, R., & Griffin, K. (eds.). (2015). *Religious tourism and pilgrimage management: An international perspective (2nd ed.).* Oxfordshire: CABI.

Ryndach, M., Kazak, A., Sergeeva, Y., Selivanov, V., Gurevskikh, O., Dolgushina, Y., & Kryukova, A. (2024). Religious tourism as a moral basis for preserving the ecology of the region. *BIO Web of Conferences, 93*, 05020.

Sampieri, S., & Bagader, M. (2024). Sustainable tourism development in Jeddah: Protecting cultural heritage while promoting travel destination. *Sustainability, 16*(21), 9148.

Schedneck, B. (2018). Religious others, tourism, and missionization: Buddhist 'monk chats' in Northern Thailand. *Modern Asian Studies, 52*(6), 1888-1916.

Shinde, K., & Olsen, D. (2020). *Religious tourism and the environment.* Oxfordshire: CABI.

Siregar, M., & Iskandar, D. (2025). Enhancing stakeholder communication and management strategies in religious tourism: A case study of Pura Parahyangan Agung Jagatkarta. *Komunikasi, 18*(2), 301-318.

Smith, V. (1992). Introduction: The quest in guest. *Annals of Tourism Research, 19*(1), 1-17.

Tabash, M., Farooq, U., El Refae, G., Al-Faryan, M., & Athamena, B. (2023). Impact of religious tourism on the economic development, energy consumption and environmental degradation: Evidence from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Tourism Review, 78*(3), 1004-1018.

Timothy, D., & Boyd, S. (2003). *Heritage tourism.* Essex: Pearson Education.

Timothy, D., & Olsen, D. (eds.). (2006). *Tourism, religion and spiritual journeys.* London: Routledge.

Tran, M., & Davies, A. (2024). The hybrid authenticity of virtual pilgrimage. *Marketing Theory, 25*(1), 139-163.

Wardhani, W., Pratiwi, R., Thohir, M., Mubarokah, L., Valen DB, J., & Setiawan, A. (2023). Kampung Wisata Purbayan: Harmonization of religious values and socio-cultural identity in community based tourism development. *Abdimas Dewantara, 6*(1), 42-49.

Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.