

Religious tourism-a bibliometric analysis of WoS publications (1992 – 2023)

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Abstract: This paper aims to conduct a bibliometric analysis of religious tourism theme in order to summarize the research's structure by different variables. Publications' data were extracted from the Web of Science Collection (WoS), since 1992 till 2023. The literature analysis was carried out with the support of VOSviewer (version 1.6.18.) software as open tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks. Trends of scientific publications, by institutions, authors, journal for three keywords: religious tourism, faith-based tourism, ecumenical tourism were identified. A complete WOSviewer analysis was performed only for "religious tourism", based on 2,571 publications downloaded. For ecumenical terms only 19 articles were found out and 29 for faith-based tourism. Thus, the suitable concept found for studies about heritage, motivation, infrastructure, case studies etc. was covered by religious tourism. The main productions belonged to several authors specialized in religious destinations from Israel, India, Portugal, Italy, Asia or America, but few of them grouped together. They tend to network with other authors ranked lower than themselves, thus amplifying the body of research on the subject. These findings may be helpful to researchers, giving them both a brief assessment regarding religious tourism and directions needed to cover other topics in the field.

Key words: *religious tourism, WoS, bibliometric analysis, VOSviewer soft, ecumenical tourism, faith-based tourism*

1.Introduction

Religious tourism is a special tourism activity that started almost with the beginning of mankind. Major religions stimulated globally the tourism, being in the same time a mean for the spread of their own religious beliefs (Pușcașu, 2015). But, in religious tourism, it is not necessarily involving the tourist's belief in a certain religion (Rahman, 2023). It is more likely a return of people to spiritual values and the search for means to satisfy this kind of motivation which causes an intensification of religious tourism, respectively of trips to some destinations able to offer tourist products that can meet specific requirements. Also, religious tourism can serve a social and cultural purpose, offering to individuals the opportunity to learn about different cultures and religious practices (Muntele & Iașu, 2006). Moreover, it is important to provide cultural support and educational resources, specialized guides, etc. to help tourists for fully appreciation of the spiritual and architectural significance of religious sites (Guriță & Scortescu, 2023). Considered as type of cultural tourism, known by different terms: religious tourism, ecumenical or faith-based tourism (Marin et al., 2020), it provides a form of travel that tends to remain very important in the world tourism market. That's why, it is consequently necessary to identify the concept, its determining factors and trends (Busuioc, 2008). Although modern tourism is regarded as a relatively new phenomenon, it is clear that its origins are rooted

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