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### Cover Page Footnote

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# Cultural Tourism, Religion and Religious Heritage in Castile and León, Spain

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Tourism is a driving force of the economy for many countries around the world. The large number of architectural and intangible World Heritage Sites have consolidated those countries in their strong positions as cultural tourism destinations. Within cultural tourism, religious tourism is particularly prominent. This work focuses on Spain and specifically on some of its regions which lack beaches but possess a wealth of religious cultural heritage, such as Castile and León, which have viewed such heritage as an asset to attract a different kind of tourist. The objectives of this study are to highlight the value of religious heritage as a tourist attraction, analyse the potential of religious heritage for religious and non-religious tourism, and observe religious tourism as an asset in depressed areas. The criterion that governs the study is to determine the profile of these tourists and their relationship with the destination. Methodologically, this work is an analysis, assessment and reflection of different processes, practices and events from a social anthropology perspective. The results identify a type of tourist more aware of sustainability and more respectful of the environment and culture, and therefore, more in tune with religion and religious heritage.

Key Words: anthropology, religiosity, pilgrimage, consumption, tourism

## Introduction

The concepts of tourism and heritage have often been linked in recent times. Heritage has become an object of consumption and nowadays, heritage processes can only be fully understood by taking into account their economic profitability in terms of tourist use (Vicente & Marmol, 2017). Additionally, as Richards (2018) points out, cultural tourism is an activity in which the main motivations of the visitor are to learn, discover, experience and consume both material and intangible cultural products of the place being visited. Cultural tourism refers to a group of products which generate dynamics and synergies that blend culture, society and territory, which in economic terms translates into high revenues per day of stay (Morère, 2017). Religious tourism has become a new tourism product that transcends purely religious motivations. People now travel not only for religious purposes or to visit sacred sites such as major religious centres, but also to engage in cultural tourism based around religious themes. This does not necessarily imply that such tourists practice a religious faith, but rather that they are motivated by knowledge of the culture or religion of a particular place,

i.e. knowledge of other places or other cultures. Despite the importance of tourism, scholars of religion have typically underestimated or marginalised this in their studies (Stausberg, 2011). However, Vukonic (2002) has argued that religion and tourism have much in common even though religious institutions have traditionally attempted to minimise this relationship.

Religious monuments play a major role in tourism: religious architecture is frequently dazzling because sacred sites are conceived and intended to be enduring and impressive in order to render the boundary between mind and matter transparent. Another important factor is the power of tradition, which has become a tool to promote religious tourism. Generally speaking, tourists like rituals, and religion possesses a wealth of them. As Rappaport (1999) has observed, the true origin of religion lies in the human need to create rituals that restore the balance between people and the environment. Thus, tangible and intangible heritage alike hold an attraction for tourists.

The potential of religious tourism is evident in the autonomous region of Castile and León (Spain), which

**Figure 1: Map of the Autonomous Region of Castile and León, Spain**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castilla\\_y\\_Leon\\_in\\_Spain\\_\(including\\_Canarias\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castilla_y_Leon_in_Spain_(including_Canarias).svg)

unites two historical regions derived from the ancient mediaeval kingdoms of León and Castile. This point is important because both possess a vast cultural heritage; so much so that Castile and León hosts more UNESCO World Heritage Sites than any other region in the world. Specifically, it has eight assets declared a World Heritage Site and more than 2000 Sites of Cultural Interest.

Of particular note among Castile and León's religious cultural heritage are its tangible assets such as churches, cathedrals and monasteries as well as its host of intangible ones, such as Holy Week with its brotherhoods and confraternities, *El Camino de Santiago*, religious processions and other expressions of traditional religiosity. As an example of this, we must point out that Castile and León has 12 cathedrals which correspond to the eleven dioceses in the community, two of them, Burgos and Valladolid, have a metropolitan seat (archbishopric). To get an idea of the antiquity of these dioceses, some of them date from Roman times, the 3rd century onwards, such as Astorga, León, Ávila, Osma-Soria, Palencia, Salamanca and Segovia, while others date from medieval times such as Ciudad Rodrigo, Burgos, or Zamora, or the end of the 16th century such as Valladolid (Martínez, 1994).

Such a profusion of churches and cathedrals of different architectural styles (Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance or Baroque) make this community a benchmark in the artistic-religious field. A good example of this is the importance of the order of Cluny, closely linked to the Camino de Santiago, which has first-rate priories such as San Martín in Frómista, San Pedro in Villalcázar de Sirga, San Zoilo in Carrión de los Condes or San Facundo and San Primitivo in Sahagún. Another good example of the importance of this community in this religious sphere has been the development of the Cistercian foundations in Castile and León from the 12th century, which has left great monumental heritage, with monasteries which are important today such as Santa María la Real de Las Huelgas in Burgos or Santa María de Gradefes in León.

As has been indicated, the religious heritage is so great that tourism around religion is used by the regional government as a tourist attraction in different international fairs and tourism promotion campaigns. A study of the phenomenon of religious tourism is thus of considerable interest, and even more so in the case of Castile and León because of its historical, social and even political connotations. To this end, this current paper is a

contribution to the research project *Clergy and Society in the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula* (HAR2017-82473-P), funded by the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness of Spain.

## Objectives and Method

In light of the above rationale for this study, the following research objectives were defined:

- to highlight the value of cultural, tangible and intangible religious heritage through the case of the region of Castile and León;
- to analyse the potential of religion as a prime attraction for religious and non-religious tourism experiences and the impact as a driver of employment and economic wealth;
- to understand the repercussion that a mass influx of tourists may have on the tourist sites.

Methodologically, this work presents a reflection from the perspective of social anthropology, from the observation of different religious matters. In this investigative process, attention has been focused on productions linked to different contexts related to religion and its heritage and tourism aspect from a cultural point of view. These are different processes, situations and events that have a base of common components that allow this analysis and comparison. The context of the situation of the territory of Castile and León, Spain, is taken as an example of representation, as it is the community in the world with the most enclaves declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, being for the most part churches, Cathedrals, Monasteries, and other minor places of worship, but with a large presence of brotherhoods, and a multitude of expressions of religiosity and ritual processes, including the *Camino de Santiago*. Sociodemographic factors, such as age, gender and training, of the target population have been taken into account in the analysis, since it has been considered that they could affect the motivation, disposition, habitus of the actors, agency and adjustment (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991).

For the treatment of qualitative data, the narrative thematic analysis of Riessman (2008) was used to establish categories of analysis, and the coding was carried out inductively through a constant comparison (Merriam, 1998). This was guided by the evaluations of Byram and Feng (2006) of the cultural experience, making an impact on the interest in knowing the forms and expressions of religiosity, of people's lives, the

ability to change the perspective, and cope with living a different experience, cultural knowledge, one's own and foreign, aspects related to spirituality, as well as knowledge about its processes.

To achieve this, we first establish the theoretical and conceptual bases of religious cultural heritage and tourism. Next, we show the results of the observation and analysis of tourism of religious heritage, within the consideration of tourism, but without losing essential aspects of the religion in which they are assigned. It is interesting to show the relationship between tourism and religion, in an area of sustainability and new tourist profiles. The discussion focuses on the derivations related to the tourism and religion of the community of Castile and León, Spain mentioned above. Finally, we end with the conclusions and proposals for the future.

## Theoretical and Conceptual Bases: Cultural Heritage and Tourism

According to Korstanje (2006), tourism today is defined as a purely economic activity with specific patterns of production and consumption that arose from the capitalist *ethos*. However, he also claims that this represents a major bias that has culminated in the idea that tourism is an entirely modern activity derived from the extreme rationality of the capitalist system, a stance which overlooks the fact that ancient civilisations such as the Sumerians or the Romans also developed channels of trade and mobility similar to modern tourism (Korstanje, 2015). As regards the concept of heritage, Llorenç Prats (2004) has stated that this is a social or rather cultural construction, since it does not exist in nature and is not present in all human societies or in all historical periods. The fusion of both concepts combined with a huge expansion in tourism has given rise to an unprecedented level of heritage consumption by tourists, which is accompanied by economic profits and expectations of economic and territorial development. Agustín Santana (2003) has observed that cultural tourism is a form of alternative tourism that represents a consummation of the commercialisation of culture, transforming cultural elements into products offered on the tourism market.

There are fewer more enriching experiences for humans than travel. The discovery of intangible cultural heritage has become many tourists' main reason for travelling, as they seek encounters with new cultures and opportunities to experience the diversity of performing arts, rituals,

gastronomy or handicrafts around the world. As early as 1989, the UNESCO General Conference gave a definition of traditional and popular culture that transcended the term culture:

*Folklore (or traditional and popular culture) is the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognised as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means.*

Many tourists today seek to discover a country based on their own points of reference, which are shaped by books, films or experiences and form part of the individual's imaginary. Such references fuel our curiosity, and popular culture plays a major role in this. Indeed, many countries rely on their popular culture to boost tourism.

In the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO defined intangible cultural heritage as

*the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity (UNESCO, 2003).*

The term cultural heritage has evolved in recent years; in the past, it was mainly used in reference to monuments, art and history, but it now encompasses a wider vision that incorporates ethnographic values arising from the cultures of different peoples and includes both tangible and intangible heritage. These other expressions of culture range from ways of life, social practices, knowledge and techniques to the different beliefs and world views of the individuals and groups that make up a community. However, as Gutiérrez Esteve (2016) has noted, the obsession in our globalised times with this 'sense of identity' as protected by UNESCO is at odds with everything that is incompatible with international human rights instruments, with the imperatives of mutual respect

between communities, groups and individuals, and even with sustainable development, and sometimes overlooks two of the fundamental pillars of anthropology; cultural relativism and the notion that culture is a systemic and related whole.

Cultural tourism has been a growing trend since the 1980s, primarily motivated by the desire to visit sites with a wealth of architectural and artistic heritage and to learn about the distinctive customs and practices of the people. Culture, leisure and tourism go hand in hand: according to data from Europa Nostra (2015), cultural heritage tourism accounts for 50% of tourism activity in Europe. Intangible heritage has also become a major attraction for many tourists, who seek to experience contact with the performing arts, rituals, handicrafts and gastronomy of other cultures.

However, intangible cultural heritage is vulnerable, as evidenced by law 10/2015, passed in Spain on 26 May 2015, to safeguard intangible cultural heritage by

*regulating the general measures undertaken by the public authorities to safeguard the assets that comprise intangible cultural heritage in their respective areas of competence.*

It should be noted that one of the main values of this intangible cultural heritage is that it is transmitted from generation to generation and is constantly recreated by communities and groups according to their surroundings, their interaction with nature and their history, endowing them with a sense of identity and continuity and helping to promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. It is here, in part, where the relationship between heritage and tourism, and the link with religiosity, arises. Beliefs, rituals and other ceremonial practices are particularly relevant due to their complexity and their capacity to bring together participatory rituals, especially those of a festive nature. Such beliefs and rituals may be related to nature and the environment, stages in the life cycle, the weather or collective sociability. Tourists do not wish to be excluded from these events and increasingly seek greater participation, unquestionably driving employment and wealth in the community in question. Neither do they want to miss the opportunity of forming part of the collective memory, albeit transitorily, sometimes mimicking the bearers of the tradition, or experiencing this cultural heritage in the flesh. From the subjective point of view, the collective experience becomes personal, and attempts are often made to

understand complex rituals in the form of specialised vocabulary, postures, gestures, or dances. There is an increasingly evident trend among such cultural tourists to acquaint themselves beforehand with what they are going to see and feel, in order to understand the ritual and ensure they have a sensory or even kinaesthetic experience of the event as perceived through hearing, smell, sight, touch, taste or other registers.

One of the main events where this can be seen is the traditional festival, defined as a series of religious and civil acts and ceremonies held to commemorate a particular day in the calendar that is significant in the traditional culture of the society that celebrates it. Such festivals have an undoubtedly religious component and often commemorate miraculous events such as an apparition of the Virgin Mary, or honour one of the various Marian, Christian or saint's days. However, as Alonso Ponga (2016) has indicated, these festivals not only a celebrate a patron saint, but also the group, comprising a group performance under the pretext of honouring the saint:

*the group also celebrates itself because 'the others', the outsiders (those from elsewhere), celebrate and honour it, considering it our own festival and participating consciously in their role as guests who temporarily enjoy our generosity, which in turn will be reciprocated when they celebrate theirs (Alonso Ponga, 2016:235).*

This is what enables tourists to engage with the culture of the festival and what leads many of them to acquaint themselves with the cultural aspects of these events, showing an interest in learning something new about another culture. This suggests that tourists today seek experiences that go beyond entertainment to contribute to their learning.

## Results

### *The relationship between tourism and religion*

Religious beliefs and practices are found in all known societies. Tylor stated (Lessa, 1979) that the origin of religion lies in people's attempts to understand dreams, trances and death. He argued that the soul was the first manifestation of religion and used the term animism to designate belief in the existence of the soul. Although debate continues on the origins of religion, studies do seem to agree on one thing: whatever the cult or belief, it satisfies people's psychological needs. In the words of

Carles Salazar (2014), religion performs a function that cannot be fulfilled by science because rational scientific explanations are unable to unravel the meaning of death: the causes of death do not endow it with meaning and therefore science cannot replace religion. Despite living in a materialistic world, the desire or need for the transcendent, the mysterious or the supernatural remains part of the human experience and has gripped humanity since ancient times. According to Malinowski (1994), people's compulsion to believe in something stems from their desire to understand or give meaning to the tragedy of death, and this is why they need religion. This fear of death itself is heightened in humans by fear of the loss of those most dear to them. Consequently, even in the present day, religious themes draw large numbers of tourists attracted by the rituals and mysticism of their own culture, as in the case of national tourists arriving to Castile and León and the *Camino de Santiago*, although many are also from other cultures. In fact, as Griffiths (2011) points out, in addition to visitors and pilgrims who practice religious tourism with specifically religious motivations, there is another group of visitors who do so for reasons other than religious ones.

Ancestor worship or a belief in the afterlife is common to most religions and is therefore a good indication that it serves a social function. In this respect, tourism can contribute to dialogue between different religions and cultures, and at the same time it can be used as an instrument for raising awareness of one's own and other people's cultural heritage. It is common nowadays to see Western tourists fascinated by practices and rituals from other parts of the world when visiting Taoist or Buddhist temples. At the same time, tourists from the East are awed by the grandeur of European churches, for example. In this sense, while the sacred has always been seen as fundamental in religious sites for believers, they can also be attractive to a wider audience, who feel the desire to share values, or because of the need for human beings to belong to a group, or for growing as spiritual and sentient beings and even seeking physical protection in times of conflict (Wiltshier & Griffiths, 2016).

In both cases, there is undoubtedly a dialogue between cultures and a consequent attempt to meet and learn about each other. What does seem clear, and was reflected at the International Conference on Tourism, Religions and Dialogue of Cultures (Cordoba, 2007), is that the complex relationship between tourism development and dialogue between faiths and cultures is rooted in the fact

that tourism shares values in common with religions and civilisations, such as tolerance, respect for diversity and rediscovery of the self and others.

Religious tourism is usually identified as tourism activity linked to religious practices in religiously significant places. But, what reasons spur tourists to visit them? Regarding the tourists who come to Castile and León, on the one hand, there are purely religious reasons, such as a desire to get closer to the divine, but on the other hand, there are cultural reasons, such as wanting to learn about one's own culture in depth or, as Aulet and Hakobyan (2011) have pointed out, learn about new aspects of culture and other forms of cultural and religious expression. Sacred sites associated with pilgrimage routes for both religious and secular tourists have become tourist objects, representing the final goal or intermediate stage of a journey in relation to the reasons for undertaking it, while religious practices or celebrations and different rituals attract the faithful and tourists alike, whose motivations may be religious or not. According to Parellada (2009), religious tourism cannot be identified with pilgrimage. He contends that a pilgrimage is typically a religious act rooted in the faith dimension of *homo religiosus*, whereas religious tourism encompasses tourists who visit sacred sites (e.g. sanctuaries, convents, cathedrals) or participate in religious celebrations (e.g. Holy Week) in order to experience their religious essence, historical value or artistic beauty, but the difference lies in the subject's motivations. This does not preclude the fact that the religious tourist and the pilgrim often converge, so while there are pilgrims whose sole motivation is religious, there are also pilgrim-tourists and simply tourists with no religious motivation who nevertheless seek this cultural experience. In any event, religious and non-religious pilgrims and tourists frequently share the same space and activities.

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO, 2001) considers religion to be one of the drivers of rapid and continuous growth of tourism activity, in conjunction with leisure, business, culture and health, and attributes these with powerful positive and negative effects on the environment, economy and society of the source and host countries, on local communities and indigenous populations and on international relations and exchanges. Likewise, in speaking of tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies, the code notes that the understanding and promotion of ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude

of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism. The code also recognises the need to promote public access to cultural sites and monuments, including religious buildings, without prejudice to the needs of worship. This demonstrates the importance that the World Tourism Organisation attaches to religiosity in relation to tourism something completely verifiable in our study territory.

One of the manifestations of religious tourism is the phenomenon of pilgrimages, which has witnessed growing research interest in recent years in the field of anthropology. Pilgrimages benefit the localities where the venerated image / object / site is located and generate tourism and business niches that provide significant economic income to the populations concerned. In our study, the case of the road to Santiago is highly significant. Hence, despite having originated in the religious sphere, pilgrimage has now entered the secular domain (Martínez Cárdenas, 2011) and for some populations it represents a real opportunity for development. There is now a wide variety of religious tourist destinations specialising in sanctuaries and sacred sites that have given rise to a multitude of pilgrimages, which can be considered a component of social integration and a commitment to peace as an indispensable condition for undertaking a journey of faith.

The public authorities are well aware of people's interest in religious matters, and in an attempt to attract a greater number of tourists, the autonomous regions in Spain — especially those located inland— have promoted tourism resources such as monasteries, churches and cathedrals as well as their considerable intangible heritage, such as Holy Week, processions and pilgrimages. Spain's tourism website (TURESPAÑA) promotes Spain as a destination with much to offer in terms of religious tourism. Among other options, it suggests undertaking a pilgrimage on the *Camino de Santiago* to the city of Santiago de Compostela, experiencing the intensity of Holy Week, which is celebrated practically all over Spain, taking part in the processions of El Rocío or Nuestra Señora de la Cabeza and visiting Spain's major monasteries and cathedrals.

From an anthropological point of view, the website highlights the opportunity of experiencing Spain's traditions, participating in special occasions to share faith and enjoy a festive atmosphere. These proposals



combine cultural interest and religious motivation, offering a different route to learning about the tradition, history, culture and art of Spain.

Tourism also has an impact as a generator of employment for Castile and León, and new profiles of tourism professionals have emerged which, as Hidalgo (2014) has indicated, include being innovative and creative, committed, versatile, ethical, empathetic and open minded, seeking quality in excellence, having the capacity to lead multidisciplinary teams and possessing a digital culture with technical and humanistic training. The arrival of national and international tourists to various places in the region of Castile and León, interested either in religious heritage in urban areas, or especially in rural areas, exerts a great impact on employment. The new tourist profiles facilitate these sources of employment. This has resulted in residents viewing tourism more favourably if they consider it beneficial because it generates employment, even if not for them directly but for their families or their community, i.e. if it has a positive impact on the local economy. In contrast, residents tend to be dissatisfied with tourism if they perceive that the authorities are more interested in reaping profits from visitors than in the benefit or welfare of the community itself. Consequently, policy is crucial, and if the goal is to generate local employment opportunities, one management objective should be to encourage the employment of local guides.

### *Tourism, sustainability and new tourist profiles*

It is important to note the emergence of a new tourist profile that differs from that of the mass tourist. This new tourist is characterised by a desire to seek new experiences, make contact with new cultures and share spaces on an equal footing with the local population and all of this with a greater respect for the destination. According to Rubio Gil (2003), these cultural tourists are more experienced and more demanding in terms of the products on offer, and seek a series of activities related to the world of culture and heritage.

It is beyond question that global tourism development must be based on sustainability, i.e. it must be sustainable from a ethical, social, economic and environmental perspectives in the short and long term. The conservation of natural and cultural capital requires good tourism management and tourism itself must contribute to sustainable development, as it is being promoted by the policies of Castile and León.

Many tourist destinations are fragile and therefore tourism activity must be mindful of the effects on local factors and must support local identity, culture and interests. This entails respect for heritage based necessarily on solidarity, respect and participation of the actors involved. Terms such as conservation, protection and value enhancement must be taken into account in any tourism activity. The World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2005) states that World Heritage Sites belong to all the peoples of the world and must be preserved for future generations. It is only through the commitment of governments and site managers, and sustainable tourism practices on the part of visitors that the world's cultural heritage can be safeguarded.

The impacts of tourism originate mainly from development and from the visitors themselves, but it is not the volume of visitors that is always the main problem; often the impacts are linked to socio-environmental factors. Inter-relationships may induce some communities to welcome visitors while other communities may show strong opposition to the presence of tourists. For instance, Tresserras (2007) has indicated that sustainable management of the *Camino de Santiago* aimed at conserving and revitalising heritage resources is complex and represents an example of shared commitment between the communities located along the route and the public authorities, private companies and associations of friends of the route. As a result, heritage conservation and sustainability becomes everyone's responsibility.

In Europe, the European Commission has supported the creation of sustainable transnational tourism products that involve a broad spectrum of public authorities and private companies in order to stimulate the competitiveness of the European tourism sector (European Parliament, 2012). Promotion of the sustainable development of religious destinations must go hand in hand with good management of access to sites of worship in order to safeguard this religious heritage, which may be overwhelmed by the growing number of pilgrims and tourists taking part in religious or spiritual gatherings. In her study of the *Camino de Santiago*, Martín-Duque (2017) found that the main negative impacts were fundamentally linked to overcrowding of the route, with the consequent risk of loss of the original identity of the route due to excessive touristification.

According to Artal and Villena (2016), cultural tourism can enhance the sustainability of destinations because of the characteristics of these tourists, who seek exposure to new lifestyles, culture and customs and interaction with the local population in a way that provides new experiences. The profile of this type of tourist also renders them more respectful of the environment. In addition, this type of cultural product attracts more visitors with a higher education level who come in the middle or low seasons, which contributes to sustaining existing cultural facilities, as we can observe in our study region. There are major differences between mass tourism and the new alternative tourists who seek more intimate contact with a territory and its nature, culture or local gastronomy, and prefers accommodation with ‘charm’ to standardised accommodation (Fraguell, 2003). There is also a difference as regards the physical and cultural activities they engage in, with frequent visits to museums and visitor centres or attendance at concerts, for example. The diversity of forms of cultural consumption has expanded the definition of culture, and therefore of the cultural tourist, who in general terms is a more desirable customer for some destinations because they spend more than other tourists, their level of education is higher and they can contribute to increasing the sustainability of destinations, thanks to these characteristics (Artal & Villena, 2016). Public policies should aim to educate visitors and the local community to value the sites and promote respectful attitudes towards the natural and cultural environment.

### Discussion: Tourism and Religion in the Region of Castile and León

The case of the autonomous community of Castile and León has been taken as a reference in this study, which has opted to a large extent for cultural tourism that revolves in most cases around religion and spirituality, taking advantage of the great cultural and religious heritage that it has. The region hosts the most kilometres of the *Camino de Santiago* in Spain, and the route—declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and the first European route of cultural interest to be declared by the Council of Europe, in 1987—has become its flagship tourism product. There is an abundance of literature with sayings about the route. One of them, popularly considered a Celtic blessing, reads as follows:

*Let the road come out to meet you. May the wind always be behind you and the rain fall softly on your fields. And until we meet again, may God hold you gently in the palm of his hand.*

Likewise, in the 2021 Jacobean Plan for Castile and León it is expressly stated that this plan addresses the most relevant and significant elements of the *Camino de Santiago*, understood as a complex historical, social, religious, cultural, and patrimonial phenomenon, being of special attention in relation to its religious aspects (Junta de Castilla y León, 2021). In addition, the official tourism website of the Regional Government of Castile and León promotes Holy Week, stating that

*as varied as cultural diversity itself, Holy Week is a demonstration of the devotion of its peoples, who celebrate it in each place in different ways, although always with the same common denominators: passion, fervour and silence.*

Revitalisation of the *Camino de Santiago* has been a goal of the Spanish State since the 1950s, with the aim of attracting tourism, culminating in the 1990s with the Regional Government of Galicia’s implementation of the ‘Plan Xacobeo’ [Jacobean Plan]. It was subsequently declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Independently of its economic impact on the territories through which it runs, the *Camino de Santiago* generates a powerful image that enhances the local cultural identity of the places along the route. This is so because the path itself has a symbolic and sacred value (Rucquoi, 2019)

Another example of this quest for symbiosis between art, tourism and religion is the *Ages of Man* foundation, [Las Edades del Hombre] a religious organisation created to promote the sacred art and culture in general of Castile and León, through conservation and the organisation of public exhibitions with a religious perspective and theme. After 25 annual editions traveling through all the dioceses of Castile and León, the spirit of this traveling exhibition is still in force today, spreading the religious heritage of the community and at the same time having an evangelising role, since we cannot forget that it is a project sponsored by a religious foundation made up of the bishops and archbishops of Castile and León through a board of trustees.

The monasteries and convents of the region represent an artistic and cultural testimony to the orders that inhabited them for centuries. Some of them are still home to monks or nuns, but others have been abandoned, often due to a lack of new members, endangering their continuity and survival. In many localities, the future use of these abandoned buildings remains uncertain, despite their imposing architecture which in many cases is subject to

**Figure 2: Convento de San Marcos, León**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El\\_Hostal\\_de\\_San\\_Marcos.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El_Hostal_de_San_Marcos.JPG)

special protection but is expensive to maintain. Possible solutions to this scenario include ceding their use for cultural and tourist purposes open to the public, installing new religious communities in the buildings, or perhaps even devising a system of accommodation for researchers or students but also open to tourists, in order to convert these sites into productive spaces. Fernández (2019) has observed that monasteries are surrounded by defensive walls to separate them from any intrusion on the part of civil society, but that far from living in isolation, their residents form part of their own society. However, opening up to the outside world through tourism has now become a necessity. In other cases, public authorities are now responsible for their operation, and some of the monasteries or convents that once provided shelter for pilgrims have been converted into luxury hotels where guests encounter the atmosphere of spirituality that imbued their creation, with the added attraction of being historical and artistic monuments. One such example is the San Marcos Parador in the city of León. It should be borne in mind that tourism is a characteristic phenomenon of our times which permeates our lives in a society that is increasingly geared towards leisure and consumption. It also promotes cultural contact that generates meaning or significance for other phenomena (González, 2019).

Another example of this fusion of tourism and religion is embodied in the cultural and tourism programme for the first *Teresian Jubilee Year* presented at the Madrid international tourism fair FITUR 2018 by the Department of Culture and Tourism of the Castile and León Regional Government. Entitled 'A year with Teresa' and commemorating the Teresian Jubilee, an exclusively religious event, the programme ran from October 2017 to October 2018 and targeted tourists, offering a plethora of historical itineraries, cultural activities and religious pilgrimages associated with Saint Teresa of Ávila. This Teresian Jubilee Year was announced by Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary, which explains that

*only truly repentant faithful can gain the Plenary Indulgence, provided they meet the customary conditions for all Jubilees: Sacramental Confession, Eucharistic Communion and Prayer for the intentions of the Roman Pontiff.*

However, the public authorities took advantage of the tourist attraction it represented, illustrating my argument that tourism and religion are mutually reinforcing.

Although pilgrimage has traditionally been exclusively associated with religion and tourism with leisure or recreation, these days, as Álvarez Sousa (1999) has indicated, tourism emphasises the cult of the self, mental

health or a different, exotic experience. Religion today is not as dominant as it once was, but many of its values, such as solidarity, justice and humanity, have been transferred to contemporary society. Religious feeling has to do with admiration, invocation, awe or fascination with reality, and thus it is possible to recover the positive bases of religions as a source of meaning and hope for people, even when they are not strictly believers. The blend of art, religion and tourism can provide very intense experiences, whether through contemplation, creation or participation in worship (Aulet & Vidal, 2018). As Adela Cortina (1997) has observed, at least five of the central tenets of civic ethics originated from the religious narratives of the Jewish and Christian traditions, which is why there is such a close proximity between civic ethics and religious morality. On many occasions, tourists and devotees share the spotlight in local agendas and also share these 'sacred spaces' by virtue of the religious symbolism that such places possess, and the sacred nature attributed to them.

## Conclusion

This work has tried to point out the value of religious cultural heritage as the main attraction in the territory of Castile and León. This region is an example of how increasingly, the concepts of tourism and heritage have become intertwined. Tourism is a purely economic activity that has led to the consumption of heritage by tourists. In the case analysed, the potential of religious heritage as a prime attraction for religious and non-religious tourism experiences has been shown.

This form of cultural tourism has become an alternative to tourism for merely entertainment or leisure purposes and represents an added value for the tourist who engages in it. The quest for knowledge about other ways of life,

curiosity about other cultures and interest in intangible cultural heritage turn out to be the main motivations of tourists who go to Castile and León, which are also shaping new forms of tourism and promoting interest in identity traits and cultural diversity. Evidently, the world of beliefs and religiosity by tourists also forms part of the attraction for this type of heritage. All this configures new tourist profiles that contribute diversity and variety in the configuration of heritage tourism.

This interest in sacred sites and religious expression has not gone unnoticed by the public authorities as exemplified in their policies, in the region of Castile and León. These have leveraged the heritage resources in their territories, whether material or immaterial to promote tourism, where the case of *Camino de Santiago* has been seen as a recurring example.

This shows tourism as an economic resource. In this sense, the impact as a driver of employment and economic wealth has been analysed, due to the new job profiles that it generates and that have given rise to new sources of employment in tourism, where the cultural manager is a key figure responsible for mediating between creation, participation, and cultural consumption.

It has also been shown that a mass influx of tourists may have repercussion that on tourist sites and thus, tourism development must be based on sustainability and must be sustainable from an ethical and social perspective. In this respect, the commitment of governments and public authorities and the exercise of sustainable tourism practices on the part of visitors are both essential to safeguard cultural heritage. It is therefore necessary to promote this alternative tourist profile which is more respectful of the environment and more committed to culture.

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