A View on Research Panorama of Spiritual Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual tourism infuses mindfulness and spirituality into the fabric of travel. The main objective of this research is to pinpoint the status quo on the research panorama of spiritual tourism. Furthermore, this study assesses how far spirituality-based research has progressed in tourism. This study employs a bibliometric approach to analyze 174 research papers extracted from the Scopus database from the year 2005 to 2022. The research molded the obtained informational structure in the form of publication years, publication sources, prolific authors and their locations, the main keywords, and most cited research papers. Additionally, co-authorship, inter-country co-authorship, and keywords co-occurrences network maps in the field of research on spiritual tourism were created with the aid of VOSviewer software. It has been found that spiritual tourism is an attracting and growing topic for researchers working in the tourism sector. The most cited paper is "Spiritual journey to Hajj: Australian and Pakistani experience and expectations" (Haq & Jackson, 2009) with 66 citations. The most productive author is Farooq Haq from Canadian University Dubai. Canadian University, Dubai, and Central Queensland University, Australia, generated the most papers. The "International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage" (n=20) published the most spiritual tourism-themed research papers.

KEYWORDS

ARTICLE HISTORY

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1. Introduction

Spiritual tourism is an experiential travel that entrails soul-searching and offers a peaceful time for contemplation. It has evolved into a method for achieving mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual harmony (Smith et al., 2010). According to Vukonic (1992), spiritual tourism is a "physical voyage in pursuit of truth, in search to understand what is sacred or divine". Visits to various holy places are also considered to be a part of spiritual tourism (Timothy & Iverson, 2006). Many authors argue that spiritual tourism has no religious connection. For instance, spiritual tourism, as defined by Norman (2012), is a leisure travel trend that is characterized by a self-aware search for spiritual development. This is also supported by Wilson et al. (2013), description of spiritual tourism as a person's quest for life's meaning whilst traveling. Traveling domestically or abroad to visit spiritual places such as mosques, cathedrals, and temples is known as spiritual tourism, according to Haq & Medhekar (2019). They additionally resort to nature like woods, lakes, seas, parks for wildlife, botanical gardens, caverns, and rocks as a way to satisfy their urge to express thanks to the almighty and find forgiveness and inner peace. Spiritual tourism has various magnitudes, purposes, and perspectives among individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds. A person may undertake the spiritual journey for various reasons such as well-being, spiritual reconstruction, personal enrichment, encouragement, restorative surroundings, self-exploration, and many other phenomena examples of spiritual dimensions (Halim et al., 2021).

The paper accentuates the advent of spiritual tourism as fundamental academic research is scarce and it is crucial to pinpoint the status quo on the research panorama of spiritual tourism. The current research will aid in assessing the research trends about spiritual tourism based on various bibliometric indicators. Consequently, the current research aims to establish the baseline data for future comparisons as well as determine the research trend on this issue. To further research and investigation into the subject, the study employed a bibliometric approach. In this assessment, the research paper's specific elements are identified like the publication year, authors, research area, journals, organizations and countries, keywords and citations, etc. By extensive review of the available literature, it is quite evident that bibliometric analysis on "Spiritual tourism" was never tried before. This limit justifies the need for the present research.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: The research methodology integrating the bibliometric methods is discussed in section 2. Section 3 throws light on the results and findings of the analysis based on research objectives. Similarly, section 4 covers discussion, and conclusions, and lastly section 5 encompasses suggestions and the study's limitations.

2. Methodology

This study aims to discover answers to the following questions:

Q1. What is the annual publication research trend from the year 2005 to 2022?
Q2. Which journals published the most articles on spiritual tourism during the years of 2005 and 2022?
Q3. Who are the most prolific authors?
Q4. Which research papers have the maximum number of citations?
Q5. Which nations and institutions are the most productive?
Q6. What is the most prominent research area?
Q7. Which keywords show up the most often?
Q8. What is the other structure of information like the co-author, country, and keywords co-occurrence analysis in this research field?

To find key papers on spiritual tourism, the researcher examined the research paper's titles and abstracts. Because of its larger coverage of quality publications, the veracity of the research information, thorough indexing, and significant numbers of citations. This study looked at research articles on spiritual tourism that were included in Scopus-indexed journals (Bergman, 2012). PRISMA stands for Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses was used to obtain data for the bibliometric

review is stated in figure 1. PRISMA principles outlined by the researchers Moher, Liberati, Tetzl, and Altman was followed. There are four steps to obtaining and extracting data for a bibliometric review utilizing the PRISMA approach.

Figure 1. PRISMA Technique for the Bibliometric Review
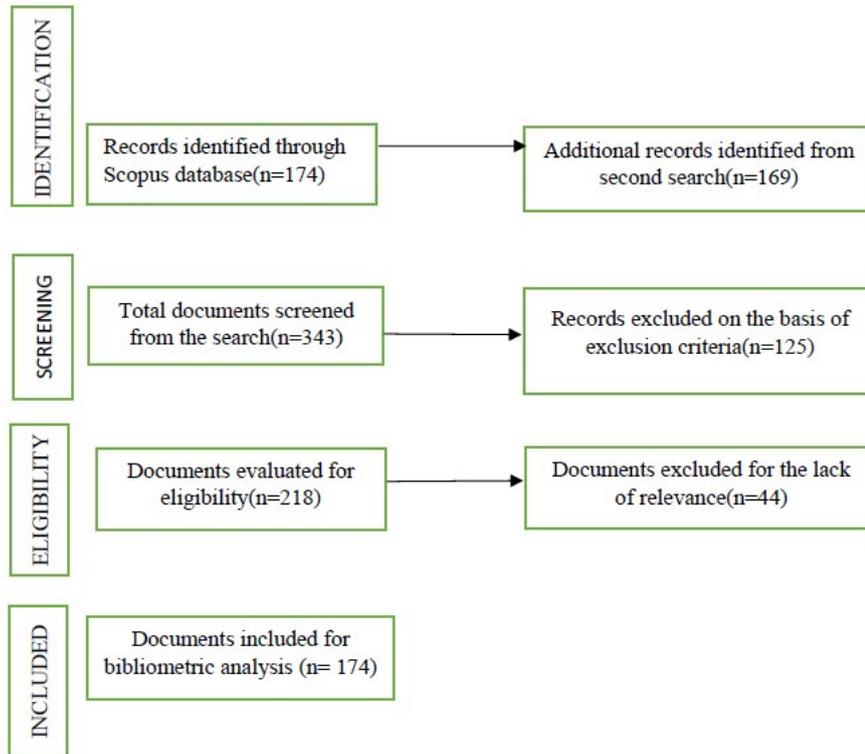
Source: Own Elaboration

The identification of the articles linked to spiritual tourism is the first stage in the PRISMA technique. Only one keyword "spiritual tourism" was employed to screen the Scopus database in this phase. The term was enclosed in quotation marks as the majority of the articles discovered did not address the subject searched when investigated separately. "Article title, abstract, and keywords" was used for the field of research. 174 articles were found. Using the same criteria, a second Scopus database search was conducted. Another 169 important papers were achieved as a result of this investigation, which we incorporated into our sample database. In the second screening phase, the content of 343 articles was tabulated and then analyzed by reading the titles and summaries of each one. Following this study, 125 documents were eliminated based on the following exclusion criteria: publications that did not have the theme of spiritual tourism as their primary content and duplicate articles. As a result, in the final stage also known as included, the database contains 174 items after 44 papers were removed due to their lack of relevancy. The researchers looked at a total of 174 documents, including 109 articles, 8 review papers, 38 book chapters, 11 conference papers, 5 books, 2 editorials, and 1 conference review.

The research publications confined to the Scopus database from 2005 to 2022 using bibliometric methodology and literature were thoroughly examined. A bibliometric analysis is a statistical tool used to understand the distribution dynamics of research publications over time and across topics by employing empirical and quantitative data (Almind & Ingwersen, 1997; Persson et al., 2009). During the past two decades, bibliometric techniques have proliferated as a procedure adopted in science and research policy. Pilkington & Meredith (2009) quantified that bibliometric techniques are used in many fields of research for three reasons: to broaden their scope of operation, to analyze the influence of a research group, and to determine the effectiveness of a particular study.

As a result, it has become one of the few truly multidisciplinary researches fields that can be extended to practically all branches of science (Glänzel, 2003). The bibliometric approach enables the compilation of methods for analyzing literature statistically. It employs citation analysis and material analysis as tools. It is an instrument used in the development of scientific literature that allows researchers to examine the amount of scientific literature and technical advancement at a certain level (Srivastava & Saxena, 2023). It facilitates a nation to be located in the world, the location of an organization within a community, and even individual scholars to be positioned within its society (Okubo, 1997).

Furthermore, using the Vosviewer application enables the visualization of all dynamics and structures related to the information. It was used to conduct co-authors, inter-country, and keyword co-occurrence analysis to methodically understand the logical networks of the research domain as per Vallaster et al., (2019). The application was carefully chosen to generate a more comprehensive and graphic representation of the data obtained (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). The software is used to integrate the most disparate bibliometric data, arranging them on network maps that aid in the depiction of the contents under investigation as stated by Laengle et al. (2018).

3. Results and Findings

3.1 Journals with Maximum Publications

Information about the journals that have published research papers on "spiritual tourism" helps researchers to figure out which publications to refer to for a literature review and which journals are addressing spirituality in tourism. Figure 2 shows some of the most well-known core journals with the maximum number of publications. All 128 (109 articles, 8 review papers, and 11 conference papers) documents were published in 76 journals. The most research articles were published in the International Journal of Religious Travel and Pilgrimage (n=20). The journal is a top-notch, global, open-access, online publication with double-blind reviews that encompasses all facets of religious travel and pilgrimage and is published by the Technological University Dublin, Dublin, Ireland. The second most important source where 9 research papers were published in Tourism Management Perspectives. Journals like the African Journal of Hospitality Tourism and Leisure, Fieldwork in Religion, and Journal of Islamic Marketing have published 5 each research studies. While the Annals of Tourism Research published 4 research papers. Wit Transactions on Ecology and The Environment has published 3 articles on the topic.

**Figure 2.** Top Journals with Maximum Publications
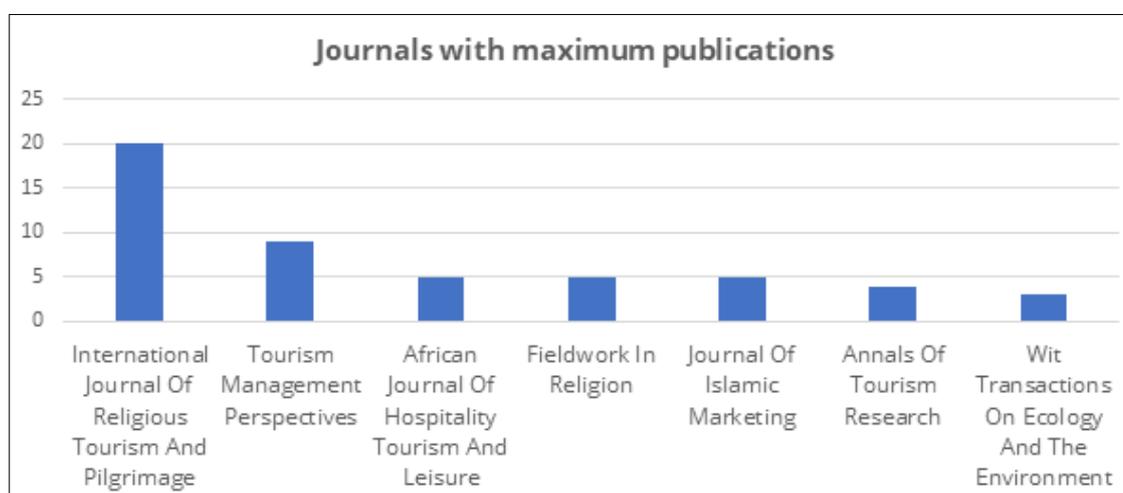
Source: Own Elaboration

3.2 Year-wise Publication

From 2005 through 2022, Figure 3 shows the year-by-year publications on spiritual tourism. From 2005 to 2016, the number of articles published was quite low, but since 2017, a substantial number of papers have been published on a regular basis. In 2021, there was a significant increase in research on spiritual tourism, with 43 articles.

Figure 3. The Year-By-Year Publications
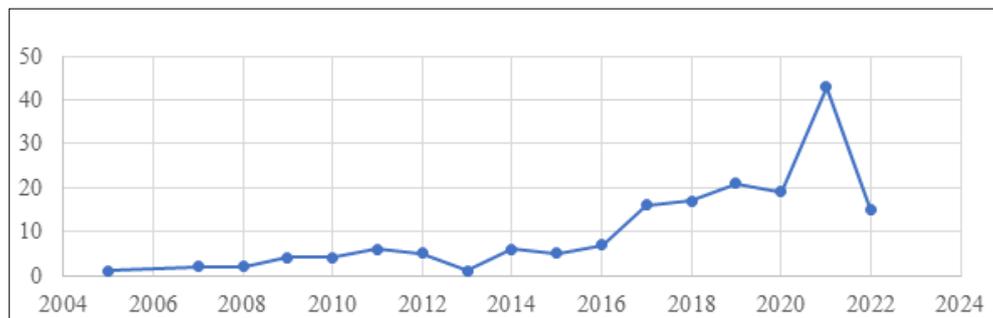
Source: Own Elaboration

3.3 Most Productive Authors

Figure 4 displays the most convincing researchers with more than two papers on "spiritual tourism" after a thorough analysis of the Scopus database. The convincing word here symbolizes that the authors are working on this domain majorly thus contributing to spiritual tourism. Authors having more than 2 research papers are considered in this section. Furthermore, the study discovered that Farooq Haq, with ten articles, is the most productive author on this subject. Currently, the author is a coordinator for Faculty of Management, Canadian University Dubai. Anita Medhekar, who has six research articles, is the second contributor with the most appealing proficiency level. The researcher is presently employed at College of Business & Law at Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Australia as Senior Lecturer. She is having a total of 29 publications so far. The following authors have 3 research papers in this area: Joseph M. Cheer, Professor of Sustainable Tourism and also Co Editor-in-Chief of Tourism Geographies; Nimit Chowdhary who is a Professor of Tourism, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi; Joanna Kujawa who is academic Head of Management Studies at Kaplan Business School, located in Melbourne, Australia; Almas Kuralbayev, Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Astana, Astana, KZ and Daniel Howard Olsen, associate professor at Department of Geography Brigham Young University Provo, Utah.

Figure 4. The Most Prolific Authors with more than Two Papers

Source: Own Elaboration

3.4 Most Cited Papers

Table 1 lists the top research papers on spiritual tourism that have been highly cited in other journals. With 66 citations, Haq F. & Jackson J. (2009) having publication on "Spiritual journey to Hajj: Australian and Pakistani experience and expectations" is the most cited. The second most popular work, "Is spiritual tourism a new strategy for marketing Islam?", has 63 citations. "The search for spirituality in tourism: Toward a conceptual framework for spiritual tourism" by Cheer J. M. et al.,1991, is the third most referenced piece of research (60). The fourth most cited paper, "Religious-spiritual tourism and promotional campaigning: A church-state partnership for St. James and Spain" by Tilson D. J., was published in 2005 and has 53 citations. Likewise, Bowers H., Cheer J. M. fifth most cited paper, "Yoga tourism: Commodification and western embracement of eastern spiritual practice" has 52 citations. "Transformational tourism as a hero's journey" was developed by Robledo M. A., Batle J. in 2017. This study is the sixth most cited paper (45 citations each). Then "Theoretical linkages between well-being and tourism: The case of self-determination theory and spiritual tourism", Spiritual tourism on the way of Saint James the current situation, 43. "Meditation retreats: Spiritual tourism well-being interventions", "Spirituality, Wellness tourism and quality of life", "Halal tourism de facto: A case from Fez" have 40 each.

Table 1. The Top most Cited Research Papers

| Authors	Source title	Year	Title	Cited by
Haq F. & Jackson J.	Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion	2009	Spiritual journey to Hajj: Australian and Pakistani experience and expectations	66
Haq F. & Wong H.Y.	Journal of Islamic Marketing	2010	Is spiritual tourism a new strategy for marketing Islam?	63
Cheer J.M. et al.	Tourism Management Perspectives	2017	The search for spirituality in tourism: Toward a conceptual framework for spiritual tourism	60
Tilson D.J.	Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing	2005	Religious-spiritual tourism and promotional campaigning: A church-state partnership for St. James and Spain	53
Bowers H. & Cheer J.M.	Tourism Management Perspectives	2017	Yoga tourism: Commodification and western embracement of eastern spiritual practice	52
Robledo M.A. & Batle J.	Current Issues in Tourism	2017	Transformational tourism as a hero's journey	45
Buzinde C.N.	Annals of Tourism Research	2020	Theoretical linkages between well-being and tourism: The case of self-determination theory and spiritual tourism	43
Lopez L. et al.	Tourism Management Perspectives	2017	Spiritual tourism on the way of Saint James the current situation	43
Norman A. & Pokorny J.J.	Tourism Management Perspectives	2017	Meditation retreats: Spiritual tourism well-being interventions	40
Nicolaides A. & Grobler A.	African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure	2017	Spirituality, Wellness tourism and quality of life	40
Carboni M. & Idrissi Janati M.	Tourism Management Perspectives	2016	Halal tourism de facto: A case from Fez	40

Source: Own Elaboration

3.5 Most Productive Countries and Academic Institutions

The study highlighted nations creating the most prolific countries based on relationships with the researcher. There are 46 different nations represented among the authors of this study. The nations with more than 4 papers are shown in Figure 5. With a maximum research paper score of 26, India is rated first. Australia has been noted as being second on the list of nations with 25 papers. The United States ranked third with 19 publications. Spain, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom are the next top countries with 13, 9, 8, and 8 respectively. It is followed by Thailand, Canada, Italy, and Japan based on the number of publications.

The prolific institutes with the highest publications on spiritual tourism are included in Figure 6. Only institutions that have published three or more articles have been considered. With eight articles, Central Queensland University, Australia, and Canadian University, Dubai are the most productive institution. With four papers, Western Sydney University, Australia; Monash University, Australia; Jamia Millia Islamia, India, and Lovely Professional University, India are ranked second on the list. Following that, six additional institutions, including Arizona State University, US; Brigham Young University located in Provo, Utah; University of Girona, Spain; University of Tehran, Iran; Amity University, India and Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Kazakhstan each account for three publications.

Figure 5. The most Prolific Countries based on Relationships with the Researcher
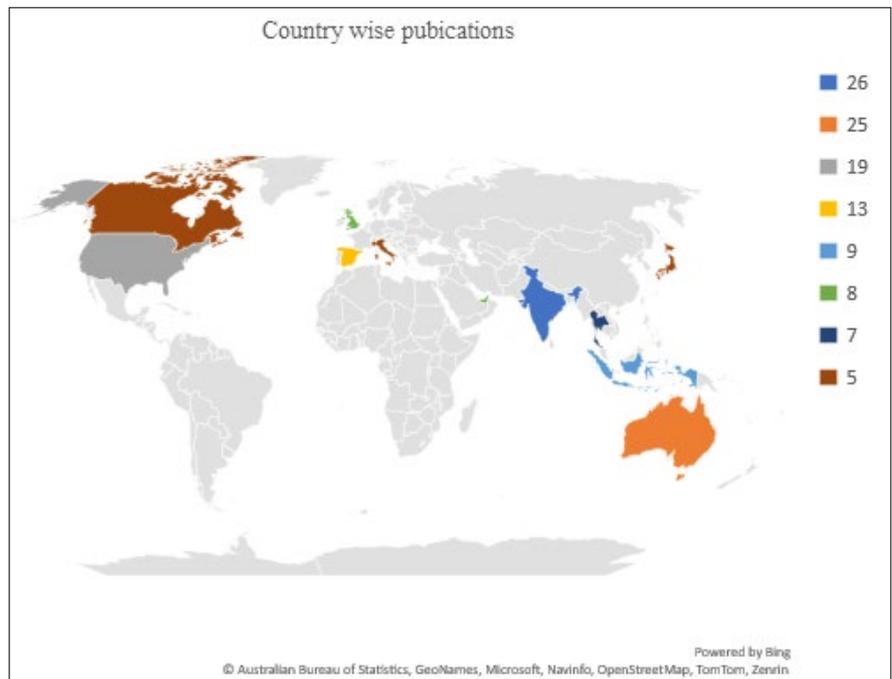
Source: Created with the help of software

**Figure 6.** The Prolific Institutes with the Highest Number of Publications
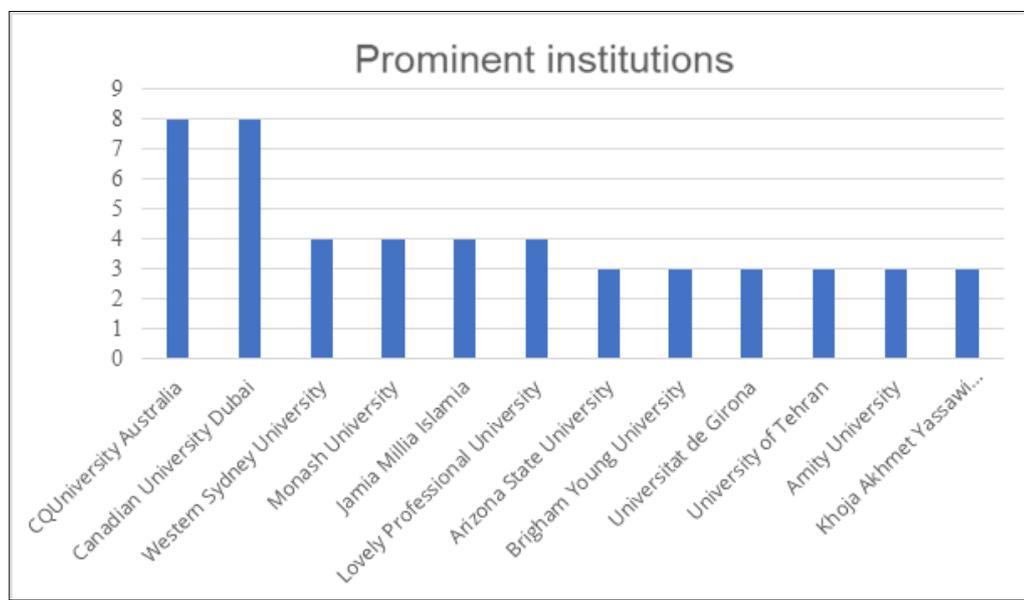
Source: Own Elaboration

3.6 Most Prominent Research Area

In the study of spiritual tourism, figure 7 demonstrates different knowledge areas and the percentage of documents published. As a result, the SCOPUS database in Business, Management, and Accounting has 101 documents. It is followed by Social Science (67), Arts and Humanities (53), Economics, Econometrics & Finance (27), Environmental Science (18), Engineering (11) and Medicine (10).

Figure 7. Prominent Research Areas and their Percentage of Documents Published
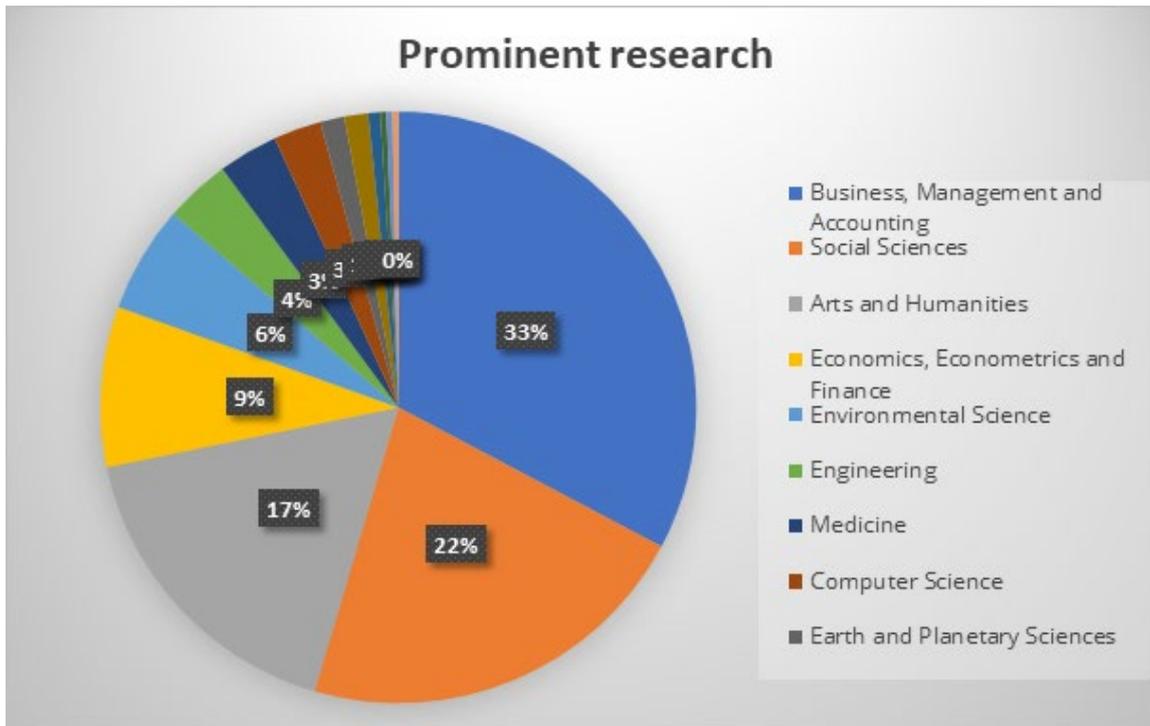
Source: Own Elaboration

3.7 Keyword Occurrence Analysis

Many keywords were used often in the various publications in this analysis. The occurrence analysis of keywords gives a sense of the study subjects and themes that the researchers are most interested in. Table 2 lists terms that appeared in the data set more than four times. In the data collection, the term "Spiritual Tourism" occurred 65 times. Similarly, the frequency of occurrence of "Tourism" and "Pilgrimage" is 25 and 20, respectively. A total of 161 keywords were discovered, with a total of 399 occurrences.

Keyword occurrence network analysis has been used for further investigation. The VOSviewer analysis approach displayed a text mining-based map, where the distance between distinct terms is employed to determine the relationship between keywords as per Laudano et al. (2018). There is a stronger connection when there is less gap between two or more words (Dolhey, 2019). Figure 8 exhibits the keyword co-occurrence network map based on the keywords in the documents. For the network map, only 25 words that had a frequency of more than 3 in the given dataset were preferred. The map illustrates the many lines that connect the various keywords. These terms appeared together in many publications in the data set, as shown by the lines. The VOSviewer tool was investigated further, and it was discovered that almost all the keywords had co-occurred with "spiritual tourism" and had total link strength of 159. The terms that have occurred the most often indicate that more study has been done in these areas.

Table 2. Keywords that Appeared in the Data Set more than Three Times

Keywords	Frequency
Spiritual Tourism	65
Tourism	25
Pilgrimage	20
Religion	16
Spirituality	15
Religious Tourism	14
India	13
Tourism Management	7
COVID 19`	6
Heritage Tourism	6
Tourist Behavior	5
Cultural Tourism	4
Islam	4
Marketing	4
New Age	4
Sustainability	4
Tourism Development	4
Tourist Attraction	4
Tourist Destination	4
Well-being	4

Source: Own Elaboration

Figure 8. Keyword Co-occurrence Network Map

Source: Created with the help of VOSviewer

3.8 Co-authorship Network Analysis

Researchers are motivated to work with other professionals to uncover new information and good research work. This type of collaboration broadens the scope of a research effort while also encouraging creativity (Sampaio et al., 2016). The co-authorship network analysis visualizes scientific and research relationships, and its patterns reveal the authors co-authored with the other authors (Dolhey, 2019). Thus, this co-

authorship network analysis identifies researchers who are inclined to collaborate with other members of the network. Co-authorship network analysis was carried out using the VOSviewer software 1.6.18. The total number of authors in the data set under consideration was 296. To build this network diagram, the software selected the authors who had co-authored with at least two other authors in the data set under consideration. As a result, the software found 23 authors. Figure 9 illustrates the VOSviewer software's representation of the co-authorship density visualization diagram.

The technological implementation of density visualization is discussed by Van Eck and Waltman (2010). Items in the item density visualization are denoted by their labels in the same manner that they are in the network and overlay visualizations. The density of items is displayed by colour at that point. By default, colors range from blue to green and then to yellow. The appearance of higher number of items near to a point along with the higher the weights of the nearby items, the colour of the point is closer to yellow. Similarly, when there is smaller number of items near to a point with the lower the weights of the nearby items then the color of the point is near to blue.

Overall link strength characteristic represents the total strength of an author's co-authorship connect with other authors. The software classifies the authors into several clusters. The appearance of authors in the same cluster specifies that they are closely linked with respect to co-authorship. There are 16 clusters in total with a total of 8 links and a total link strength of 18. Cluster 1, cluster 2, and cluster 3 have three authors each. The clustering approach in VOSviewer is discussed in great depth by Waltman et al., 2010.

Figure 9. Represented Co-authorship Density Visualization Diagram
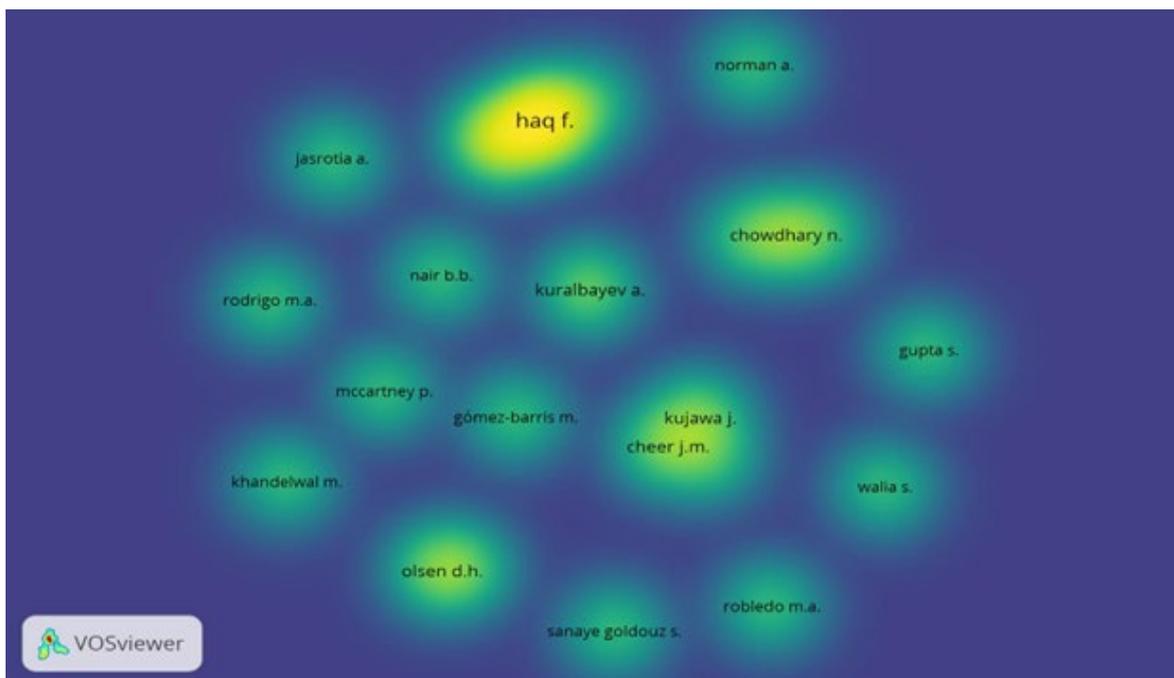
Source: Created with the help of VOSviewer

3.9 Intercountry Co-authorship Network Analysis

This section addresses the inter-country-based co-authorship network analysis. It determines the author's collaborations with other country's authors. The intercountry co-authorship network map is portrayed in Figure 10. The data set included a total of 48 nations. The VOSviewer tool discovered that 14 of these numerous nations have co-authorship relationships with one another keeping 4 as the minimum number of documents of a country. The largest set of connected items consists of 7 nations. Three clusters were created after the inter-country co-authorship network analysis: cluster-1 (Canada, India, and the United States); cluster-2 (Australia, Indonesia, and Japan); and cluster-3 (United Arab Emirates). The total link strength is 12.

Figure 10. The Intercountry Co-authorship Network Map
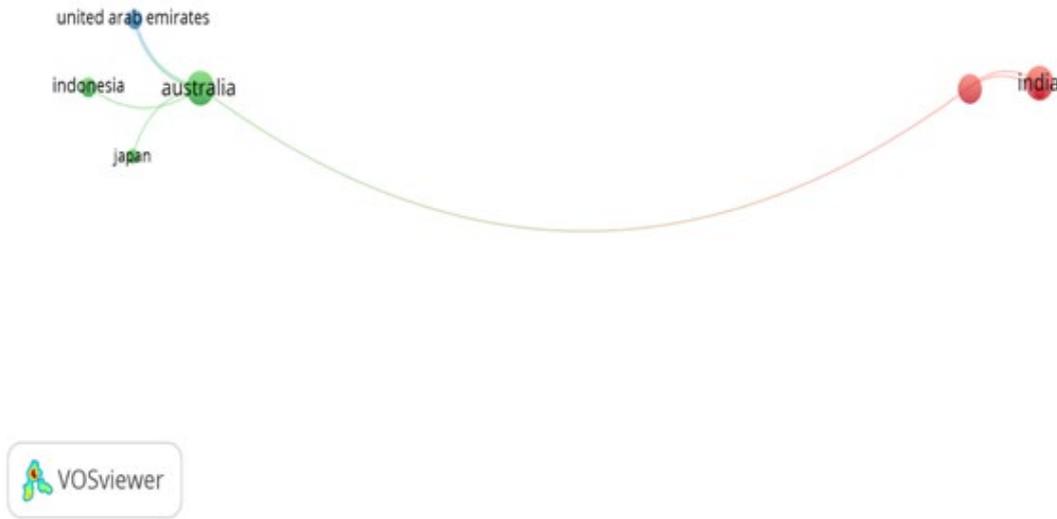
Source: Created with the help of VOSviewer

4. Conclusion

It has been noted that the definition of tourism in the twenty-first century has evolved since, contrary to earlier associations with religious pursuits, it now refers to the investigation of one's own identity and the fulfillment of one's life (Cheer et al., 2017). There has been an apparent development and rise in the popularity of spiritual tourism destinations (Buzinde, 2020). After the pandemic, spiritual tourism, particularly wellness tourism, seems to have been a growing trend worldwide and has become a special interest tourism segment fuelling global travel resurgence. The spiritual potential has once again been identified in several worldwide sites where there is a certain "spiritual magnetism" owing to the effect of attractions connected to historical, geographical, and social features, in addition to moral behavior (Buzinde, 2020). At the moment, tourist sites all around the world are progressively utilizing innovative tourist business models to generate revenue (Robledo, 2015). The identification of key characteristics that influence individuals' inclinations to visit spiritual locations will enable practitioners to develop more advanced techniques for rehabilitation and positioning of such destinations in the future (Garg et al., 2021). The tourism sector may engage in niche marketing by concentrating on spiritual tourists across the world. The paradigm shift in tourism is a chance for the nation to draw visitors from across the world who want to learn more about themselves and improve their lives by experiencing the essence of spirituality (Azevedo, 2020). Here also tourist satisfaction is important as it is a measure of destination loyalty intention (Valle et al., 2006).

As there is a paucity of essential academic study on the topic and it is crucial to do more research and analysis. The objective of this paper was to examine both research trends and academic production using a bibliometric approach. This research gives a bibliometric analysis of several studies on spiritual tourism published between 2005 and 2022. From the Scopus database, a total of 174 documents were chosen. This analysis guides researchers on the righteous trajectory by offering insights on notable publications, authors, institutions, and nations in the field, as well as keywords often used in spiritual tourism research. According to the findings, the number of research articles published on spiritual tourism has steadily increased significantly in the past six years, the highest in 2021. It implies that it is a growing topic, and the lines continue to progress. With 66 citations, publication on "Spiritual journey to Hajj: Australian and Pakistani experience and expectations" is the most cited paper in the literature (Haq & Jackson, 2009). Farooq Haq from Canadian University Dubai (n=10), is the most productive author on this topic. Furthermore, when compared to other universities and institutes with eight articles, Central Queensland

University, Australia, and Canadian University, Dubai are the most productive institution. The journal named "International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage" (n=20) published the most publications on spiritual tourism. Further, this investigation splits the inter-country-based co-authorship network into three clusters, with India being the most dominant and lies in cluster 1. This study also includes a keyword occurrence analysis, which revealed that the keywords "Spiritual Tourism", "Tourism" and "Pilgrimage" occurred 65, 25, and 20 times respectively.

4.1 Theoretical Implication

This analysis has several clear implications. For instance, the outcomes of the year-by-year publishing, as well as the most cited publications, have kindled interest in this domain. Second, research scholars might uncover studies and new research avenues by reviewing author-wise publications and journals that published numerous studies on the topic. Similarly, publication analysis by prominent country and institutions suggest a global interest in the topic. This study's results support research in terms of authorship, journal publication, and institutional connections. Third, keyword occurrence analysis allows future scholars to pinpoint hotspots in the study. The primary objective of an article may be represented by its keyword, as well as the frequency with which it appears, revealing the framework and evolution of research themes. Research is considered to be more cogent when it encompasses a large geographic region and offers global results. Similarly, co-authorship and intercountry co-authorship network analysis allow researchers to cooperate with other professionals both within and outside a country's borders. These findings can help in exploring research, publications, and other relevant topics in the field of this segment of tourism study overtime periods. This study has demonstrated that research on spiritual tourism is fast evolving through bibliometric analysis and visualization of the included literature.

4.2 Managerial Implications

The research paper emphasizes the emergence of spiritual tourism-oriented research activities and proposes their implications in the tourism industry. As spirituality is a term with numerous facets, identifying a country as spiritual involves much more than only looking at those with a significant religious population. Spirituality is strengthened through tourism. It is one of the fast-growing segments in tourism. It has multiple effects on several sectors, and its growth will result in greater employment prospects, tourist and traveller experiences, respect for local communities, preservation of the environment, and many other advantages (Halim et al., 2021). When a destination is commercialized in the best possible way, it will contribute to and support the promotion of economic growth.

The United Nations World Tourist Organization (UNWTO) classified spiritual tourism as one of the travel categories with the quickest growth, businesses in the tourism industry must attract tourists who are interested in spiritualism. The findings are of particular importance to researchers, academics, decision-makers in government and research institutions, as well as scientists. The bibliometric research on spiritual tourism has the potential to equip managers and other stakeholders in the tourist sector with invaluable insights into the research landscape, emerging trends, and potential prospects. The use of this information can provide useful acumen for making strategic decisions, fostering competitiveness, and promoting sustainable growth within this dynamic industry. The utilisation of bibliometric analysis has the potential to unveil emerging patterns and areas of interest within the realm of spiritual tourism. This information may be utilised by managers to discern novel prospects and cultivate inventive products and services that align with the dynamic demands and preferences of spiritual tourists. This practise can facilitate the strategic allocation of research endeavours and financial resources towards currently underexplored domains that possess the substantial potential for the spiritual tourism sector. The assessment of the effectiveness of spiritual tourism efforts and campaigns may be conducted by examining the citations and engagement metrics of relevant publications. This can aid in assessing the efficacy of marketing campaigns, promotional initiatives, and destination development endeavours. The identification of crucial research domains and potential obstacles might provide valuable insights for policymakers in promoting responsible tourism practises. Gaining knowledge about the prominent authors and institutions within the arena of spiritual tourism may assist managers in recognising significant players and possible partners for collaborations,

marketing alliances, and initiatives related to the development of destinations. Through an examination of the expansion in scholarly papers and citations pertaining to spiritual tourism, managers may engage in informed prognostication regarding the forthcoming demand for such experiential endeavours. The utilisation of bibliometric analysis enables the evaluation of the calibre and pertinence of extant research within the given subject. The use of rigorous research may effectively bolster decision-making processes and provide evidentiary basis for the justification of funding allocations or investment decisions.

Management should carefully develop their marketing tactics to draw in foreign visitors by providing them with the opportunity to experience spirituality. By transforming their areas into attractions using the appropriate branding and marketing strategies, governments must encourage spiritual tourism. Branding helps to disseminate through word-of-mouth and generate the ideal views about certain locations and travel destinations (Suban, 2022). An effective branding process moves from the product to the brand and from the place to the destination. To strengthen its brand image, the destination must stand out from the competition. It is suggested to determine if the sites are good for a shorter or longer amount of time and must emphasize distinctive qualities. The goods and services must be presented to the intended market in the form of a distinctive catchphrase that will be remembered by travelers all across the world. To draw in a wide range of guests, it is recommended to provide both pre-packaged excursions and custom trips. The representatives of other nations must be contacted. Tourists should have access to basic infrastructure and facilities. There should be a match between visitor expectations and actual spiritual experiences in order to get trust and recognition on a global scale. The tourist department and the local tour providers are properly coordinated. Use of digital technologies may improve the experience and ease the travel (Kaur, 2016; Roziqin, 2023). To create a strategy for branding and marketing spiritual tourism, academics, practitioners, and researchers must work together. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that this study will make a significant contribution to the subject of tourism and spirituality, with positive implications for all stakeholders, both directly and indirectly engaged.

4.3 Limitations and Scope for Future Research

Despite its numerous virtues, our study has certain limitations that might be seen in future research directions. To begin, this study searched the Scopus database for spiritual tourism publications. As a result, publications that were not indexed in Scopus were excluded. Researchers may use more databases in the future, like Web of Science and Google Scholar, amongst many others. Second, a significant limitation of this study is the approach used in bibliometric analysis which emphasizes more on numbers and investigating the relationship between authors, associations, and ideas. Third, the study employed only the VOSviewer for analysis. Future studies can also make use of Gephi, CiteSpace II, Bibexcel, and Tableau in addition to the VOSviewer. Fourth, Several Criteria (annual publication research trend, journals that published the most articles on spiritual tourism during 2005-2022), most prolific authors, research papers having the maximum number of citations, nations, institutions, prominent research area and keywords were considered in the bibliometric approach. Similarly, future research might concentrate on more network diagrams for a more thorough study. Future studies in this area could look for keywords that are more relevant to the theme of spiritual tourism research to acquire a better understanding of that domain. This study can be repeated with bibliometric studies from different research fields.

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