

## Bibliometric Analysis of Literature on Religious Tourism in Web of Science

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### Abstract

This study aims to assess current trends in religious tourism research utilizing bibliometric approaches and associated materials published between 1992 and 2022. The other three objectives of the study are to describe interesting research topics in religious tourism, to show the advancement of understanding in this area of research, and to identify the essential features of religious tourism studies. The Web of Science bibliographic database is used to collect bibliographic data on religious tourism. After various bibliometric indicators have been summarized, “citation analysis, co-citation analysis, and keyword co-occurrence analysis” are used to establish the relationships between “keywords”, “documents”, “authors”, “sources”, and “countries”. VOSviewer is used to display the results as network maps (version 1.6.18). As a result of the study, it was determined that religious tourism research focused around four main themes such as sustainable development and location, religious tourism, tourism and culture, and religious places and entrepreneurs, and these themes reached the highest number of publications especially in 2019. In addition, it was concluded that the most cited studies were done by Rinschede (1992), Blackwell (2007) and Shinde (2010) and that the most influential journal on religious tourism is Annals of Tourism Research and Turkey is the most cited country.

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## INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism is an important type of tourism (Rinschede, 1992). Religious tourism is a constantly improving tourism market (Zamani-Farahan & Eid, 2016; Sharpley, 2009). Religious tourism encompasses travels to spiritual destinations for religious objectives (Raj et al., 2015). Pilgrimages, conferences, festivals, and seminars are all examples of religious tourism activities (Stausberg, 2011).

Previous religious tourism research has concentrated on the effects of religious tourism on companies and the local economy (Shinde, 2010; Dafuleya et al., 2017). There have also been studies on the significance of religious sites for religious tourism (Poria et al., 2011; Nolan and Nolan, 1992). The viewpoint of locals on religious tourism has been proven to be essential in studies (Suntikul & Dorji, 2016; Uriely et al., 2003). The environmental and political impacts on religious tourism destinations are also examined (Shinde, 2007; Henderson, 2011; Alipour et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies assessing tourist views toward pilgrimage organizations have been discovered (Lee et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2016). According to Iliev (2020), religious tourism changed and evolved over time. It has also been noticed that this type of tourism is vital for tourist marketing segmentation. These studies look into visitors' travel motivations, expectations, and experiences. It also addresses religious tourism from the perspective of local people and sustainable destination management (Kim et al., 2020).

There is a shortage of reviews on religious tourism studies. Therefore, our understanding of its recent date evolution remains restricted. The patterns and intellectual framework of religious tourism research, in particular, have yet to be adequately investigated and understood. This study aims at current trends in religious tourism research utilizing bibliometric approaches and associated materials published between 1992 and 2022. The three objectives of the study are to describe interesting research topics in religious tourism, to show the advancement of understanding in this area of research, and to identify the essential features of religious tourism studies.

It is thought that this study will contribute further to the existing scientific literature by examining previous studies in the field of religious tourism. In addition, by determining current trends and important positions in the field of religious tourism, the study provides the opportunity for researchers to understand the priorities in this field and prepare their studies accordingly. The study offers a different approach from other studies by using bibliometric analysis methods in religious tourism research.

This study can contribute to researchers in this field to better understand the economic and social dynamics of religious tourism by reviewing previous studies examining the effects of religious tourism on tourism businesses, local economy and society. Additionally, this study can be a guide for policy makers and destination managers in the field of religious tourism. It can provide valuable information for the sustainable management and promotion of religious tourism.

As a result, this study can contribute to the existing knowledge in the field of religious tourism, helping researchers shape their studies in this field more effectively and contributing to a better understanding of the subject of religious tourism.

The Web of Science bibliographic database is used to collect bibliographic data on religious tourism. After various bibliometric indicators have been summarized, “citation analysis, co-citation analysis, and keyword co-occurrence analysis” are used to establish the relationships between “keywords”, “documents”, “authors”, “sources”, and

“countries”. VOSviewer is used to display the results as network maps (version 1.6.18). The second section of this study describes the research methodology. The third section includes the findings. In the last section, the results of the study are discussed.

## **Religious Tourism**

Religious tourism is a type of travel that involves people traveling to religious and sacred places, and these trips usually include at least some religious motivations (Rinschede, 1992). Religious tourism is closely related to holiday and cultural tourism. How to spend free time is an important issue, especially during pilgrimages (Rinschede, 1992). The distinction between pilgrims and traditional tourists can sometimes be blurred, and most visitors represent a complex profile (Nolan & Nolan, 1992). Even for a secondary reason, tourists visiting religious sites may share the same places with pilgrims (Olsen & Timothy, 2006). This complexity is especially compounded when considering that holiday visits attract different participants (Nolan & Nolan, 1992).

Spiritual tourism is considered a subtype of religious tourism that focuses on the search for more individual and personal meaning and is considered a special form of religious tourism. Spiritual tourism includes not only religious but also cultural and historical interests (Blackwell, 2007). Religious tourism, on the other hand, addresses not only religious experiences but also tourists' cultural interests, curiosities and their search for a new meaning in life (Blackwell, 2007). Therefore, religious tourism not only offers the opportunity to experience religious rituals, but also gives the chance to engage with the cultural heritage, artistic values and historical events in the region (Heydari Chianeh, Del Chiappa & Ghasemi, 2018). Religious tourism also has broad socio-cultural significance by offering visitors the opportunity to purchase religious souvenirs. In this context, religious tourism brings together religious and cultural richness, offers visitors a variety of experiences and plays an important role in the tourism industry. (Collins-Kreiner, 2010).

New perspectives and terms regarding religious tourism have come to the fore in the literature. It was emphasized that during this period, religious tourism was considered the most established form of tourism and religious travels were closely associated with the tourism sector (Favreau-Lilie, 1995). Researchers have adopted spatial, historical, and cultural approaches to examine the intersection of religion and tourism (Olsen & Timothy, 2006). In particular, the boundaries between pilgrimage and tourism have become blurred over time and it has been suggested that the two concepts are becoming more integrated with each other (Badone & Roseman, 2004).

## **Methods**

### **Data Source and Retrieval**

Web of Science is used for data retrieval in this study. On January 10, 2023, a data query was executed. We searched for the keyword "religious tourism" in "topic". We have reached 466 publications on religious tourism. Because only papers associated with "religious tourism" are included, excellent data quality control is ensured. The second inquiry sought relevant materials published during the study period. This study only retrieves publications published between 1992 and 2022 since the phrase "religious tourism" first appeared in 1992 and the collection in 2022. The second query produced 603 results. Only full-scaled articles were chosen for the final query. As a result, 466 documents were extracted for “the multi-leveled bibliometric analysis” in this study.

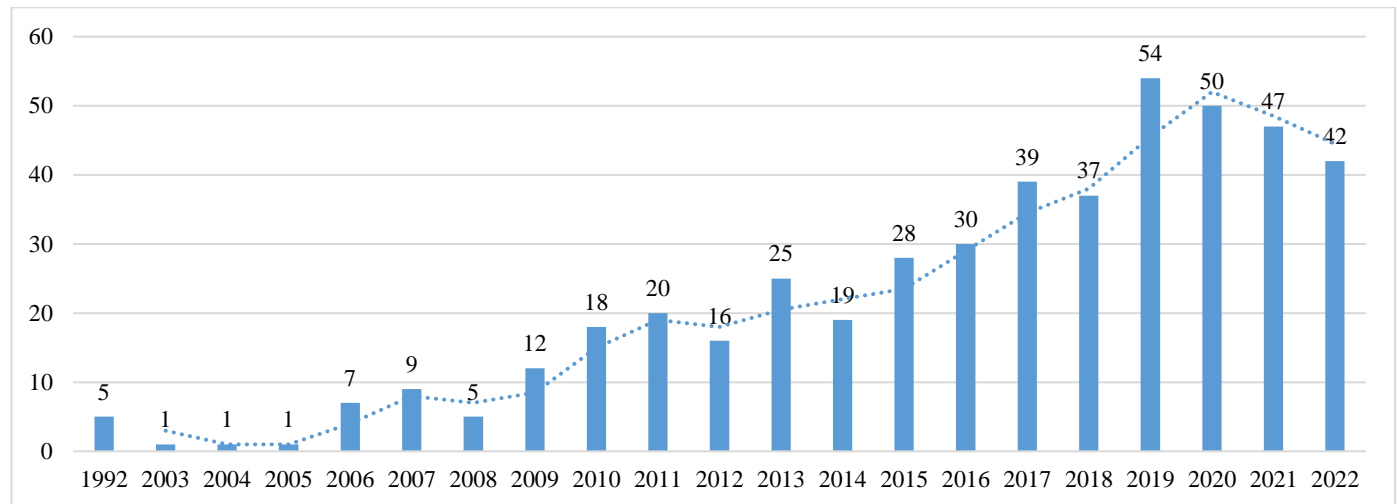
In this work, "citation analysis," "co-citation analysis," and "keyword co-occurrence analysis" were utilized to

discover the links between bibliographic entries. We used VOSviewer (version 1.6.18) to create network maps from the data. VOSviewer was chosen because of its outstanding visualization capabilities (van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

## Results

### Descriptive Statistic

The number of religious tourism publications has increased dramatically, from 5 in 1992 to 29 in 2017, with a peak of 54 in 2019. After 2019, the number of publications began to fall (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Numbers of publications on religious tourism (1992–2022).

Approximately half of the religious tourism publications ( $n = 230$ ; 49.35%) are in the category "Hospitality Leisure, Sport, Tourism" (Table 1). "Religion" ( $n = 82$ ; 17.59%), "Management" ( $n = 31$ ; 6.65%), "Geography" ( $n = 28$ ; 6.00%), and "Environmental Studies" ( $n = 25$ ; 5.36%) are all popular subjects.

**Table 1.** Topics in religious tourism literature (1992–2022).

Subject Area	Number of Documents	%
Hospitality Leisure Sport Tourism	230	49.35
Religion	82	17.59
Management	31	6.65
Geography	28	6.00
Environmental Studies	25	5.36
Sociology	22	4.72
Environmental Sciences	21	4.50
Green Sustainable Science Technology	21	4.50
Business	13	2.79
Social Sciences Interdisciplinary	11	2.36

(Note: Only subject areas with more than ten documents are displayed)

### Keywords

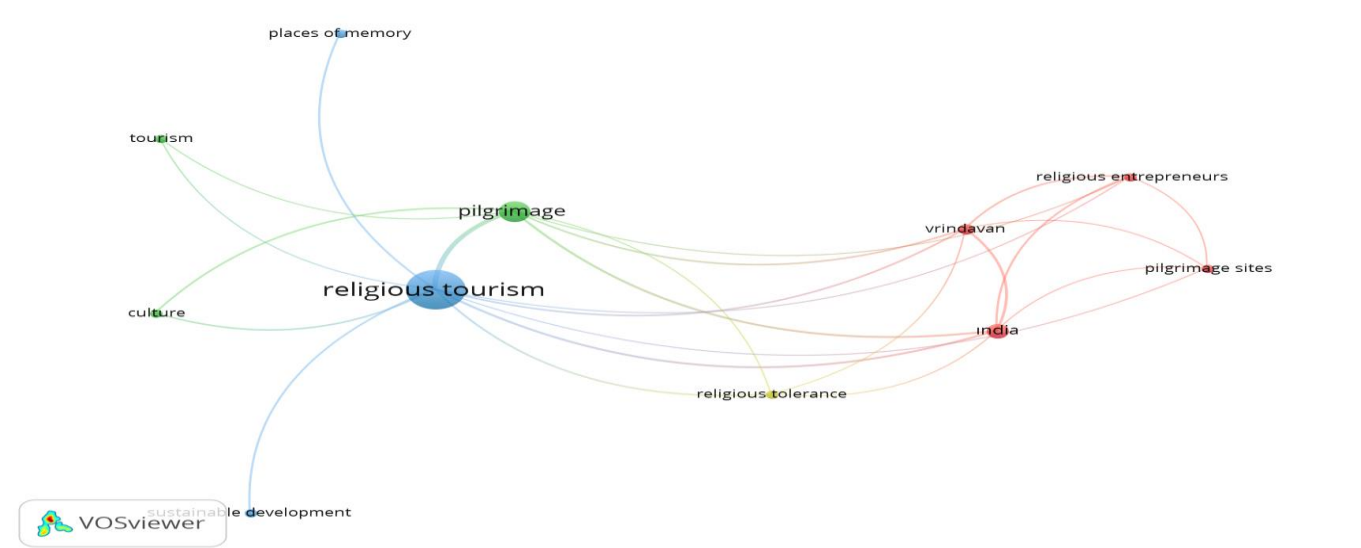
From 1992 to 2022, the literature on religious tourism has 150 terms. 11 keywords pass the "keyword co-occurrence analysis" criteria with a minimum of two occurrences (Table 2). These keywords are organized into four clusters that correspond to the four research themes of religious tourism (Fig. 2 a). The blue cluster is titled "sustainable development and location," and it includes three keywords: religious tourism, places of memory, and sustainable development. Because it is the largest in the network and contains the most significant keyword "religious tourism," which attaches at the network's centre, this cluster represents the most crucial domain of religious tourism

studies. The green cluster, often known as "tourism and culture," is made up of three keywords: tourism, culture, and pilgrimage. The red cluster is titled "religious sites and entrepreneurs" and includes the following keywords: India, Vrindavan religious entrepreneurs, and pilgrimage sites.

**Table 2.** Keywords from of religious tourism studies (1992–2022).

Keywords	Number of Occurrences
Religious Tourism	38
Pilgrimage	11
India	5
Vrindavan	3
Religious entrepreneurs	2
Religious tolerance	2
Culture	3
Pilgrimage sites	2
Place of memory	2
Sustainable development	2
Tourism	2

(Note: Only keywords that appear at least twice are displayed)



**Figure 2.** Keyword co-occurrence network map in religious tourism literature (1992–2022)

**Documents**

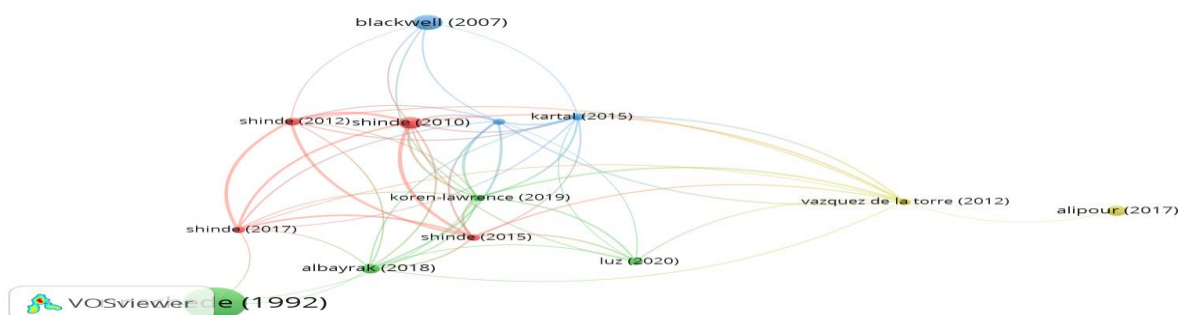
14 of the 466 documents examined had at least ten citations. Rinschede (1992) (citations = 280), Blackwell (2007) (citations = 61), Shinde (2010) (citations = 41), Zhang Mu (2007) (citations = 29), and Alipour (2017) (citations = 28) are the top five most-cited papers (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Most-cited documents on religious tourism (1992–2022).

Documents	Authors	Sources	Citations
“Forms of Religious Tourism”	Rinschede (1992)	“Annals of Tourism Research”	280
“Motivations for Religious Tourism, Pilgrimage, Festivals and Events”	Blackwell (2007)	“Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Festivals Management: An International Perspective”	61
“Entrepreneurship and Indigenous Entrepreneurs in Religious Tourism in India”	Shinde (2010)	“International Journal of Tourism Research”	41
“Religious Tourism and Cultural Pilgrimage: a Chinese Perspective”	Zhang Mu (2007)	“Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Festivals Management: An International Perspective”	29
“Environmental Impact of Mass Religious Tourism: From Residents' Perspectives”	Alipour (2017)	“Tourism Analysis”	28
“Exploring religious tourist experiences in Jerusalem: The intersection of Abrahamic religions”	Albayrak (2018)	“Tourism Management”	27
“Policy, planning, and management for religious tourism in Indian pilgrimage sites”	Shinde (2012)	“Journal of Policy Research in Tourism Leisure and Events”	19
“Examining the religious tourism potential of Manisa, Turkey with a marketing perspective”	Kartal (2015)	“Tourism Review”	16
“Pilgrimage and religious tourism in Islam”	Luz (2020)	“Annals of Tourism Research”	14
“Planning for urbanization in religious tourism destinations: insights from Shirdi, India”	Shinde (2017)	“Planning Practice and Research”	13
“Life-cycle stages in religious tourism development: a comparison of case studies”	Vazquez de la torre (2012)	“Cuadernos De Turismo”	13
“Religious tourism and religious tolerance: insights from pilgrimage sites in India”	Shinde (2015)	“Tourism Review”	11
“Visitors with their 'Backs to the archaeology': religious tourism and archaeology”	Koren-Lawrence (2019)	“Journal of Heritage Tourism”	11
“The Potential for Northern Ireland to Promote Politico-Religious Tourism: An Industry Perspective”	Simone-Charteris (2011)	“Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management”	11

(Note: Only documents with at least ten citations are displayed)

The citation analysis connects 14 articles and groups them into four clusters (Fig. 3). The green cluster, which consists of four publications, contains the most-cited article, Rinschede (1992). Shinde leads the red cluster, which also has four articles (2010, 2012, 2015, and 2017). Blackwell (2007), Kartal (2015), and Simone-Charteris lead the blue cluster of three publications (2011). Alipour (2017) and Vazpuez de la Torre (2012), respectively lead the Yellow cluster.

**Figure 3.** Clusters of documents on religious tourism are depicted on a network map (1992-2022). (clusters of citations).

Authors

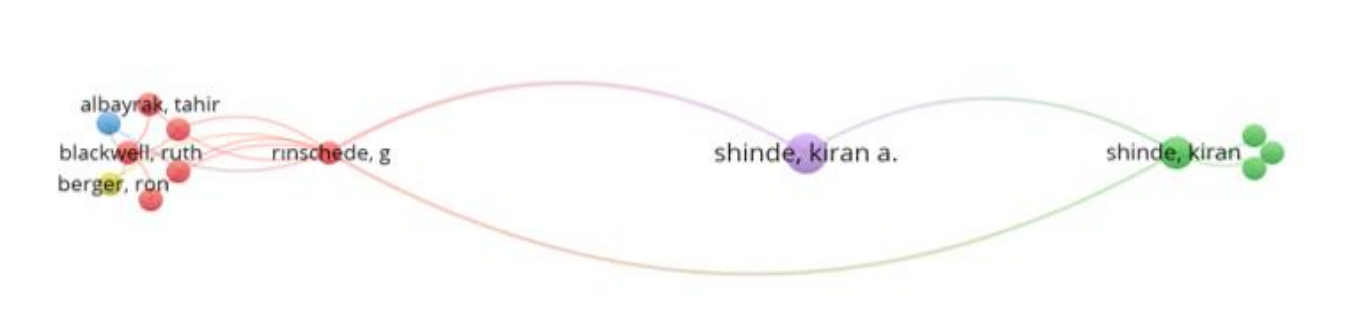
From 1992 to 2022, 102 writers contributed to the publication of religious tourism research. Rinschede, G. (documents = 1, citations = 280), Shinde, Kiran (documents = 3, citations = 65), Blacwell, R. (documents = 1, citations = 61), Huang, Li (documents = 1, citations = 29), and Jie Yan-Geng (documents = 1, citations = 29) are the five most-cited writers (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Best productive and cited religious tourism authors (1992–2022).

Author	Documents	Citations
Rinschede, G.	1	280
Shinde,Kiran	3	65
Blackwell, R	1	61
Huang, Li	1	29
Jie Yan-Geng	1	29
Lai Xiting	1	29
Liu Ji	1	29
Wang Jian-Hong	1	29
Zhang Mu	1	29
Alipour, Habib	1	28
Forouzan, Iman	1	28
Olya, Hossein G. T.	1	28
Albayrak, Tahir	1	27
Berger, Ron	1	27
Bideci, Müjde	1	27
Caber, Meltem	1	27
Drori, Netanel	1	27
Herstein, Ram	1	27
Shinde, Kiran	2	26

(Note: Only authors with at least one document and twenty citations are displayed)

Author co-citation analysis is used to determine the relationships between writers. Twelve writers fulfill the minimum citation criterion of 20 for “the author co-citation analysis”. The co-citation network is divided into five clusters (Fig. 4). The red cluster is the most significant because it not only has the most writers (n = 6), but several of them are well-cited authors, such as Rinschede, G. and Blackwell, R. The green cluster, lead by Shinde, Kiran, is the second-largest. The blue and yellow clusters are extensions of the red cluster. The purple cluster connects the red and green clusters.



**Figure 4.** Author clusters on religious tourism are depicted on a network map (1992-2022). (clusters of co-citations)

Sources

Documents on religious tourism come from 1296 different sources, the majority of which are periodicals. Table 5 contains a list of periodicals that have published at least two articles on religious tourism. In terms of citations, the

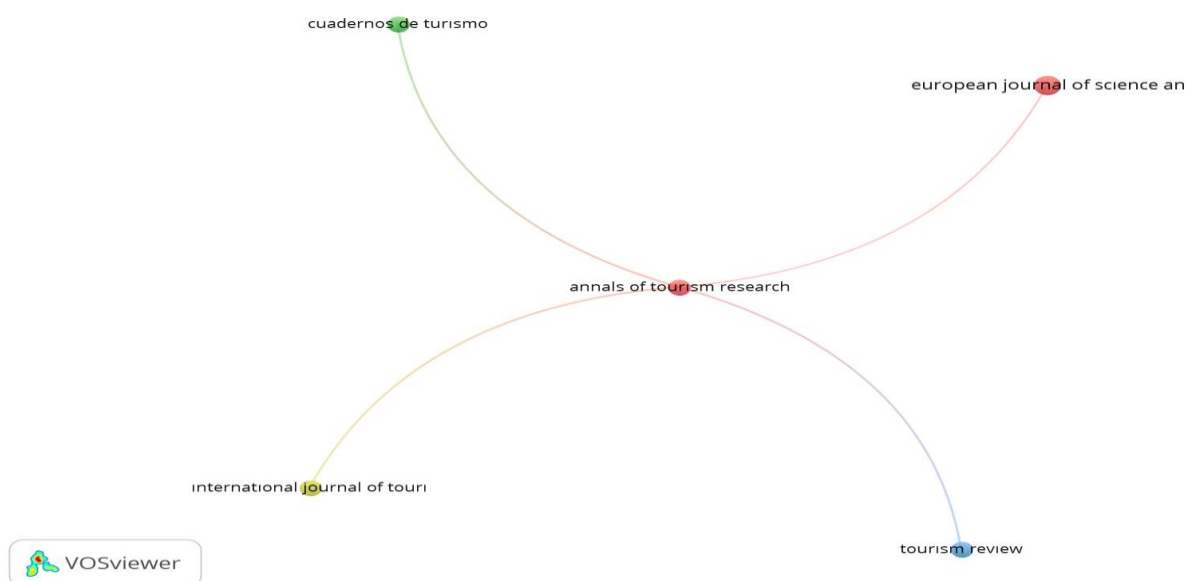
most influential journal on religious tourism is *Annals of Tourism Research* (citations = 294), followed by *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Festivals: An International Perspective* (citations = 91), *International Journal of Tourism Research* (citations = 50), and *Tourism Review* (citations = 27).

**Table 5.** Most productive sources on religious tourism (1992–2022).

Source	Documents	Citations
<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	2	294
<i>Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Festivals: An International Perspective</i>	3	91
<i>International Journal of Tourism Research</i>	2	50
<i>Tourism Review</i>	2	27
<i>Cuadernos de Turismo</i>	2	19
<i>European Journal of Science and Theology</i>	3	10
<i>Horizonte-Revista de Estudos de Teologia a ciencias da Religiao</i>	2	2

(Note: Only journals with at least two documents are displayed.).

Figure 5 depicts the co-citation networks of sources. In terms of source co-citation, 7 journals meet the two-citation minimum. The source co-citation network is divided into four clusters (Fig. 5). The red cluster with two objects is the largest. *Annals of Tourism Research* and the *European Journal of Science and Theology* are part of this cluster. *Cuadernos de Turismo* is included in the green cluster. *Tourism Review* is part of the blue cluster. *International Journal of Tourism Research* is included in the yellow cluster.



**Figure 5.** A network map depicting religious tourism source groupings (1992–2022) (co-citation clusters)

### Countries

From 1992 to 2022, 25 countries contributed to the publication of religious tourism research (Table 6). The five most-cited countries are Türkiye (72 citations), England (62 citations), Australia (48 citations), India (43 citations), and Israel (52 citations).

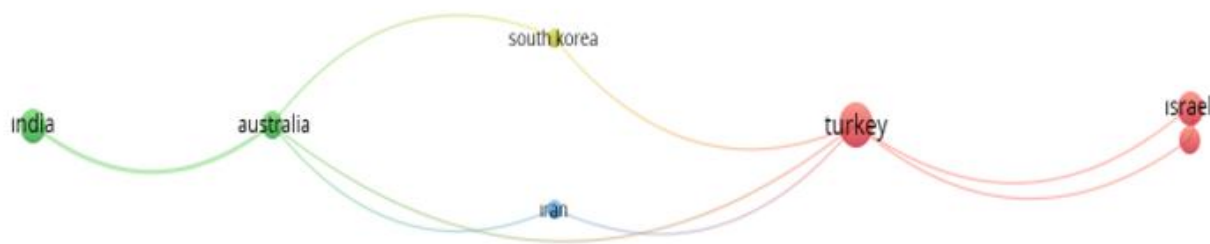


Table 6. Most productive countries on mountain tourism (1992–2022).

Country	Documents	Citations
Türkiye	5	72
England	2	62
Israel	3	52
Australia	2	48
India	3	43
Peoples R China	1	29
South Korea	1	28
Iran	1	28
Spain	4	26
Mexico	2	20
North Ireland	1	11
Slovakia	4	10
North Macedonia	1	9
Taiwan	1	9
Romania	1	5
Czech Republic	1	4
Usa	1	4
Brazil	6	3
Indonesia	1	3
Colombia	1	2
Russia	3	2
Kenya	1	1
Portugal	1	1
Pakistan	1	0
Poland	1	0

(Note: Only countries with at least one document published are displayed).

The citation network of countries is comprised of 25 countries with a minimum of two papers. These countries are divided into four groups (Fig 6). The red cluster consists of three countries, led by Türkiye, Israel, and England. Australia and India lead the green cluster two countries. The blue cluster represents Iran. The yellow cluster represents South Korea.



**Figure 6.** Religious tourism clusters are depicted on a network map (1992–2022) (citation clusters)

## Discussion and Conclusions

This article applies multi-leveled bibliometric approaches to examine religious tourism literature produced between 1992 and 2022. The following conclusions can be taken from the results.

“The keyword analysis” described four religious tourism study themes, namely "sustainable development and location", "religious tourism", "tourism and culture," and "religious sites and entrepreneurs". This finding is consistent with Shinde (2010), Dafuleya et. al., (2017), Shinde (2007), Henderson (2011), and Alipour et. al. (2017) who also underscore the importance of sustainable development and location in the research of religious tourism. In

addition, these findings are consistent with Poria et al. (2011); Nolan & Nolan (1992) who underscore the development of tourism and culture in the research of religious tourism. Finally, these findings are consistent with Suntikul & Dorji (2016), Uriely et al. (2003); Iliev (2020), and Kim et al. (2020) who also underscore the images of religious sites and entrepreneurs in the research of religious tourism.

It was determined that the highest number of publications related to religious tourism was in 2019. Approximately half of the religious tourism publications are in the category "Hospitality Leisure, Sport, Tourism." The most cited publications are the study of the authors of Rinschede (1992) (citations = 280), Blackwell (2007) (citations = 61), and Shinde (2010). In terms of citations, the most influential journal on religious tourism is *Annals of Tourism Research* (citations = 294), followed by *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Festivals: An International Perspective* (citations = 91), *International Journal of Tourism Research* (citations = 50), and *Tourism Review* (citations = 27). The most cited country is Türkiye with 72 citations.

In line with the findings obtained in the study, it is shown that sustainable development and location are of great importance in religious tourism research. Researchers should focus more on these issues, develop sustainable tourism practices, and examine in more detail the effects of religious tourism on the local economy and environment. The relationship between tourism and culture is also noted as an important theme in religious tourism research. In this context, practitioners need to work to better understand and manage the interaction between religious tourism and local culture. Religious tourism emerges as a theme that emphasizes the relationship between religious sites and entrepreneurs. Researchers should develop strategies for the sustainable management and development of religious sites and examine the contributions of entrepreneurs to religious tourism. In this study, the most cited studies and publication sources are stated. By examining these sources more closely, researchers can identify pioneering studies and important references in their fields. They should also comparatively examine religious tourism practices in different countries and evaluate international cooperation opportunities. Interdisciplinary approaches may be useful to better understand the complexity in this field.

Religious tourism attracts great attention both in the academic world and industry. This interest has led to a number of important studies examining various aspects and impacts of religious tourism. First, studies focusing on the effects of religious tourism on companies and the local economy have evaluated the impact of religious tourism on businesses as well as its contribution to the local economy (Shinde, 2010; Dafuleya et al., 2017). These studies have also highlighted the importance of religious tourism for economic sustainability. Second, studies focusing on the role and importance of religious sites in religious tourism (Poria et al., 2011; Nolan & Nolan, 1992) have emphasized the cultural dimension of religious tourism. The connections between religion and culture are an important factor shaping tourists' experiences. Third, investigating the local people's perspective on religious tourism (Suntikul & Dorji, 2016; Uriely et al., 2003) helped us understand the effects of religious tourism on society. The support and participation of local people is critical to the sustainability of religious tourism. There are also studies examining the effects of environmental and political impacts on religious tourism destinations (Shinde, 2007; Henderson, 2011; Alipour et al., 2017). These studies have addressed not only the economic but also the environmental and political dimensions of religious tourism. Finally, studies focusing on tourists' travel motivations, expectations and experiences (Lee et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2016) have emphasized the importance of religious tourism in terms of marketing and segmentation. Understanding tourists' expectations can help manage destinations more effectively.

There are a few limitations to this paper that need be addressed in future research. First, we carried out this study only on the web of science database. The study can be developed using the Scopus database. Secondly, we used the keyword "religious tourism" in the study. Keywords such as "Halal tourism", "faith tourism", and "Pilgrimage tourism" can be used in future research. Finally, we included only full-text research articles in the study. Therefore, in future studies, papers, book chapters, research notes, etc. included in the sources. Despite the limitations of the study, it is thought to be useful because it gives intellectual information about the literature. Future research will continue to increase and better understand the sustainability of religious tourism by further examining these themes. It will also contribute to a better understanding of religious tourism in terms of both the safeguarding of religious sites and its social impacts.

### **Declaration of interests**

The author declares that I have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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