
Critical Tourism Studies 9

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Title

Spiritual Tourism: A Review of Empirical Studies for Future Research

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Abstract

Spiritual tourism has received increased attention during the last few years in tourism research. COVID-19 made us rethink the way we live and the way we travel, particularly in the developed world. A huge part of the developed world population stopped travel and suffered the impact of being closed at home for long periods of time. Spiritual-related practices, and the associated values and resources, are believed to be critical for dealing better with the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Chirico, 2021), and their benefits for humans' physical and mental wellbeing gained visibility and recognition during the last two years (Coppola et al., 2021). Some countries even reported a high reliance on spiritual beliefs during the pandemic and that this fact was associated with better mental health (Lucchetti et al., 2020). We now have a new world, to which all people need to readapt. Now it's time to become reenchanting with the world, attributing true meaning to expressions like care, purpose, and hope, starting this process with the connection with ourselves. Travel is also different now, and spiritual tourism, due to its features as tourism product and to the described societal context, has more conditions to grow, gaining more visibility and demand.

In this context, the present study aims at reviewing the academic published literature that involved empirical studies, focusing on understanding the demand for spiritual tourism, which is a necessary step for developing research in this field. To accomplish this objective, electronic searches were conducted using a specialist research database, SCOPUS, to select scientific articles considered as directly relevant to the subject matter of the paper. This systematization of the literature provides an analysis of the published research, focused on the demand for spiritual tourism in recent decades. The main contribution is the in-depth analysis of empirical articles about the demand for spiritual tourism, allowing us to understand what is known about the profile, motivations, expectations and behaviour of spiritual tourists. From this analysis, it is possible to identify gaps in the literature which help to set up research pathways for the future. In doing so, it also raises awareness with regard to future analytical methods and to the most frequently included dimensions of the concept.

Chirico, F. (2021). Spirituality to cope with COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and future global challenges. *Journal of Health and Social Sciences*, 6(2), 151–158.

Coppola, I., Rania, N., Parisi, R., & Lagomarsino, F. (2021). Spiritual Well-Being and Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Italy. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 12.

Lucchetti, G., Góes, L. G., Amaral, S. G., Ganadjian, G. T., Andrade, I., Almeida, P. O. de A., do Carmo, V. M., & Manso, M. E. G. (2020). Spirituality, religiosity and the mental health consequences of social isolation during Covid-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 1-8.