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ORIGINAL PAPER

Conceptualizing the Changing Faces of Pilgrimage Through Contemporary Tourism

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Abstract
This paper aims to conceptualize the pilgrimage and tourism relationship in the contemporary world. As the boundaries between pilgrimage and tourism have become blurred, there is a need to find a more holistic way to understand the nuances of the pilgrimage-tourism relationship. This conceptual paper argues that pilgrimage offers a stage for rejuvenation in the contemporary era. In the 21st Century, the concept of pilgrimage travel has re-emerged in tourism with a new identity that goes beyond the idea of pilgrimage as a journey to a sacred place. Building on this recognition, this paper provides a conceptual framework that emphasizes the linkages between pilgrimage and contemporary tourism using three core elements: meaning, ritual, and transformation. This framework allows broader interpretations of pilgrimage travel in different phenomena of tourism in the contemporary era.

Keywords Pilgrimage · Spiritual journey · Ritual · Spirituality · Secular tourists · Contemporary tourism

1 Introduction

In the contemporary world, the concept of pilgrimage is clearly evolving. Not only are traditional pilgrimage centres attracting more visitors than ever before of an apparently increasingly diverse nature, but new pilgrimage centers and concepts keep emerging (Stausberg, 2011). Pilgrimage is gaining a more prominent place in the tourism industry, and it seems that we are witnessing the growth of the concept of pilgrimage travel in the conceptualization of multiple tourism segments. Collins-

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Kreiner (2016b, p. 327) called this phenomenon the 'rejuvenation of pilgrimage', linking it to the notion that people are in search of non-ordinary experiences such as 'transformation, enlightenment, and life-changing or consciousness-changing events' (Collins-Kreiner 2016b, p. 328). As such, the concept of pilgrimage in the contemporary world can be seen in many segments of tourism where people travel to destinations seeking the deep and enduring element of transformation. Driven by, but also driving, the diversification of the concept of pilgrimage, scholars have noted spiritual tourism, dark tourism (Collins-Kreiner, 2016b), church tourism (Kiely, 2013), frontier tourism (Laing & Crouch, 2011), backpacking tourism (Mendel, 2010), Dracula tourism (Hovi, 2010) and volunteer tourism (Mustonen, 2006) as forms of pilgrimage. However, Collins-Kreiner (2016b) argues that this rejuvenation has caused pilgrimage to lose its religious element – the supposedly unique identity that differentiates pilgrimage from other types of travel.

This conceptual paper aims to explore the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism in the contemporary world. The central argument is that the concept of pilgrimage is re-emerging through tourism with a new identity, beyond the narrow window of religious and/or spiritual tourism, or visits to formal or secular pilgrimage sites. The paper begins with a critical review of the pilgrim-tourist dichotomy. The purpose is to clarify understandings of the evolution of the pilgrim's position in the postmodern era from a tourism perspective. This paper supports Olsen's (2010, p. 850) belief that 'the pilgrim-tourist dichotomy is an outdated argument'. Building on this recognition, the paper goes on to present three core elements that construct the relationship between pilgrimage and contemporary tourism: meaning, ritual, and transformation. Through this paper, a more holistic understanding of the nuances of pilgrimage in the contemporary era emerges. It provides a new foundation on which research can be undertaken to consider the nature of pilgrimage and spirituality in the context of tourism.

2 The evolution and demise of the pilgrim-tourist dichotomy

The debate about pilgrims versus tourists has been one of the central research topics in pilgrimage studies over the past few decades (MacCannell, 1976; Cohen, 1979, 1992; Smith, 1992; Vukonić, 1996; Digance, 2003, 2006; Olsen, 2010; Fedele, 2014). Research on pilgrimage from a tourism perspective has been wrapped up in attempts to categorize pilgrims and tourists based on their similarities and differences, with a strong focus on the underlying mechanisms that explain pilgrims' and tourists' travel motivations and behaviour. However, many debates surrounding the pilgrim-tourist dichotomy have been bound up with Max Weber's concept of 'ideal types' (Weber, 1949; Olsen, 2010) argues that such debates are one-sided exaggerations that do not reflect the real world. He noted, 'what scholars and theologians have done is taken the characteristics of the "ideal" pilgrim and the "ideal" tourist, exaggerated them, placed them on opposite ends of a spectrum, and then contrasted them' (Olsen, 2010, p. 849). In essence, viewing pilgrims as 'travelers seeking spiritual fulfilment' and tourists as 'travelers seeking hedonism' is a very superficial view in the postmodern world.

Historically, it was Cohen (1979), who pointed out that there is no general type of tourist in the modern world. Cohen argued 'different kinds of people may desire different modes of tourist experiences' (Cohen, 1979, p. 180). Given that, Cohen developed a typology of five modes of tourist experience: recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental and existential. These travel experiences range from the most 'superficial', motivated by pleasure and a desire for hedonistic fulfilment, to that of the modern pilgrim on a quest for meaning at someone else's centre, which is the most 'profound' experience. Cohen claimed that tourists travelling in the 'existential mode' are similar to pilgrims as both are fully committed to an 'elective' spiritual centre. Simply put, they have found a new elective centre through tourism that has a deep spiritual meaning, producing, in some cases, life-changing experiences (Cohen, 1979). Cohen's typology provides a foundation to describe different experiences that may be had through different tourism activities. It is important to recognize that Cohen presaged the idea of postmodernism in noting that any individual tourist may experience more than one mode of experience on a single trip, recognizing the fluidity of people.

Following on from this, Cohen's (1979) five modes of tourist experience are of limited value within the concept of postmodernism that encompasses 'everywhere and nowhere' and is characterized by its compromising nature that is not 'either-or', but 'both-and' (Denzin, 1991, p. 151). In the tourism context, the postmodern tourist or post-tourist is often characterized as a traveler who enjoys combining different types of experience in a single trip (Feifer, 1985). Post-tourists habitually switch from one mode of experience to another, which has led to them being identified as fluid, subjective, and open to change (Maoz & Bekerman, 2010). In other words, the motives of the tourist, though secular, can be interpreted as those of the pilgrim (Fleischer, 2000). For example, while it is common to see people hiking on traditional pilgrimage paths, such as the Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain, or circumambulating Mount Kailash in Tibet, many of them would not be considered as, or consider themselves to be, pilgrims. Hence, even for non-religious people, experiences founded on religious values can be as appealing as they are for pilgrims – albeit for different reasons. Likewise, pilgrims can also behave like and be motivated in the same ways as tourists, even in a sacred space (Schramm, 2004). This links to Turners' remark that 'a tourist is half a pilgrim if a pilgrim is half a tourist' (Turner & Turner, 1978, p. 20). Within this context, pilgrimage and tourism often overlap and intertwine. Therefore, putting them at opposite ends of a spectrum is of little value for our understanding as it fails to recognize these nuances.

Smith (1992) proposed a similar typology to Cohen's. Instead of dividing pilgrims and tourists into two distinct groups, Smith (1992) suggested the relationship between them may be conceptualized as two parallel, interchangeable lanes following different quests (either the sacred or the secular), using a pilgrim-tourist continuum. As Smith (1992, p. 4) put it, some religious tourists may be 'more pilgrim than tourist', whereas others may be 'more tourist than pilgrim'. However, Graham & Murray (1997) argue the continuum would be useful only for classifying various sub-markets of pilgrimage, but not tourists. Indeed, Feldman (2017, p. 70) argues that 'the pilgrim and the tourist are hardly dichotomies, and that they serve poorly as opposite poles on a typological scale'. Most importantly, the usefulness of Smith's (1992) pilgrim-

tourist continuum in reflecting the multi-layered meanings of pilgrimage and tourism in the contemporary era is debatable, especially for post-secular tourists. Indeed, Nilsson & Tesfahuney (2018, p. 171) noted that 'the post-secular tourist is one that traverses the sacred-secular divide, neither traditional pilgrim nor secular tourist but one that embodies both'.

In addition to the nature of relations between pilgrims and tourists changing, the 'sacred place' as an essential pilgrimage site is defined differently in the contemporary era. As Zargham Boroujeny (2017) noted, the pilgrimage site is not necessarily religious, and the secular world has much potential to create a sacred place. The so-called 'spiritual magnetism' (Preston, 1992, p. 33) of the sacred place is bound by historical, geographical, and social factors, and human values Eade, 1991; Rinschede, 1997; Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2018, p. 172) eloquently argued that 'post-secular tourism (re)construct pilgrimage places in novel ways, neither sacral nor secular, but rather a hybrid or combination of both – spaces that are neither explicitly modern/secular nor traditional/sacred'. Subsequently, modern pilgrimage sites such as Ground Zero (the site of the 2001 terror attacks in New York City), Chernobyl (the site of the 1986 nuclear accident in Ukraine), war graves, celebrity graves and residences such as Elvis Presley's Graceland, are attracting travelers who self-identify as pilgrims (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). Thus, Preston (1990, p. 21) argued, the spiritual magnetism does not reside in the shrine alone 'but in the people who attend it, the journey to it, and the village or town that sends and receives pilgrims'. New Age pilgrimage is an interesting example. The term refers to those who emphasize the experiential and embrace inner spirituality (Digance, 2006). These pilgrims emphasize the transformation of the Self, through a 'quest of meaning' (Digance, 2006, p. 39). For Roof (1999), the New Age pilgrims view their faith as a 'spiritual journey' or a 'quest', a belief in a holistic form of divinity that imbues all of the universes, including human beings themselves. The quest is not for religion, *per se*, but rather a desire to experience the different forms of spiritualism that bind people of different cultures together. This newer and more flexible definition of pilgrimage is described as a journey that is 'redolent with meaning' (Digance, 2006, p. 36), a 'valuistic journey' (Liutikas, 2012, p. 38) and a 'personally meaningful experience' (Di Giovine, 2013, p. 74). Following on from this, Digance (2006) argued for the importance of motivation in pilgrimage, as for her the inner and outer journey are the essential pilgrimage experience.

Tourism in this era is often conceptualized as a highly complex series of production-related activities (Munt, 1994; Cohen, 2004, 2008, 2012). Munt (1994, p. 104) argues that 'tourism is everything and everything is tourism', which means the concept of tourism in the contemporary era is a highly diversified reality. Consequently, defining religious tourism in today's world is not an easy task. As religion is an essential element of culture, most religious sites are also important components of cultural tourism. The definition of religious tourism has, therefore, often emerged as a result of the understanding of tourists' motivations. For instance, Rinschede (1992, p. 52) defined religious tourism as a 'form of tourism whose participants are motivated in part or exclusively for religious reasons'. Rinschede's definition differentiates religious tourism from other forms of tourism by highlighting the motivation of the tourists. However, he also argues that religion is not always the sole purpose of such tourists. Heidari et al., (2018) defined religious tourism as a travelling activity that

focuses on the visiting of sacred sites, where tourists aim to engage with or intensify their links with a specific faith. In comparison, tourism that seeks to explore the elements of life which lie beyond the Self and contribute to body-mind-spirit balance is referred to as spiritual tourism (Heidari et al., 2018). Based on this, the numinous yet palpable distinction between spiritual tourism and other segments of tourism where people can engage their spiritual side emerges.

In the contemporary era, pilgrimage is noted as offering a stage for rejuvenation where the concept of pilgrimage travel re-emerges through tourism with a new identity (Collins-Kreiner, 2019). This phenomenon may be linked to the term 'quiet pilgrimage', which is defined as 'uncounted people improvising odd journeys in the hope that their voyages out might become voyages in' (Macfarlane, 2012 cited in Feldman 2017, p. 78). This means the outer journey (actual physical movement through space over time) is the vehicle for the inner journey (psychological development or growth) (Morgan, 2010). For example, scholars have noted dark tourism, volunteer tourism, backpacking tourism and frontier tourism as part of the rejuvenation of the concept of pilgrimage in the contemporary world (Mustonen, 2006; Mendel, 2010; Laing & Crouch, 2011; Collins-Kreiner, 2016b). Dark tourism is defined as the act of travelling to sites or attractions that are associated with death, violence, suffering or disaster (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). The concept of pilgrimage travel is clearly visible in dark tourism, where travel to sites of death and violence is linked to the religious pilgrimages of ancient times (Stone, 2005). Pilgrims travelling to places linked with the death of Christ is a good example. Indeed, Collins-Kreiner (2016b, p. 328) claims that dark tourism is a rejuvenation of pilgrimage as they 'both emerge from the same milieu to include the sites of dramatic historic events that hold extra meaning'. Thus, dark tourism has been identified as a form of secular pilgrimage in the contemporary world (Sharpley, 2005; Isaac & Ashworth, 2011; Collins-Kreiner, 2016a). Similarly, volunteer tourism has been identified as a form of tourism 'undertaken as a traveller or pilgrim rather than merely as a tourist' (Morgan, 2010, p. 258). Cohen (2008, p. 332) claimed this form of tourism is for those who look for a more profound 'meaning' from their holiday. Additionally, volunteer tourism has been framed as an altruistic form of tourism, with Scheyvens (2002) claiming volunteer tourism is an element of 'justice tourism'. As such, it 'may involve individuals from Western countries paying to come to the Third World to assist with development or conservation work, as they desire to achieve something more meaningful than a pleasure-filled, self-indulgent holiday' (p. 102). Accordingly, volunteer tourism has been identified as having the potential to provide a stimulating cathartic experience (Zahra & McIntosh, 2007), one that offers an opportunity for self-exploration and relating (McIntosh & Zahra, 2008). Hence, Mustonen (2006) labelled this form of tourism as the Western-based pilgrimage.

Shaffer (2004) noted that backpacking, at least in its idealised form, is a type of tourism where people travel in the hope of gaining an extraordinary sense of place and a deeper understanding of the Self. Backpackers travel to remote areas, relative to their homes, to steer away from the touristic and established sites to experience what Cohen (2008, p. 332) described as 'the last remnants of an authentic way of life or untouched nature'. Scholars have argued that backpacking is a contemporary rite of passage (Shaffer, 2004; Noy & Cohen, 2005; Matthews, 2008). For example,

Noy (2004) provides evidence that backpacking trips function as a rite of passage to adulthood, where tourists can experience connectedness with the Self. Within the interpretive framework of Turner's (1969) 'rite of passage', Morgan (2010) claimed that encounters with Otherness are elicited in the liminal phase where the individual crosses the liminal threshold and experiences transformation. Thus, the term 'rite of passage' is used to mark the transformative experience of the backpacker, physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually.

Cohen (2004) has defined frontier tourism as a solo or small group trip with a guide to remote and dangerous locations at geographic and cultural peripheries of the world. Examples include trekking to the poles and across deserts, deep-sea diving and climbing Mount Everest. The frontier is often associated with a sacred place in many religions and spiritual practices around the world (Shackley, 2001). For example, the summit of Mount Everest, known as the Mother Goddess of the Earth, is a sacred place for the people who live at its base (Carver, 2013). Thus, for Laing & Crouch (2011), recreating the journey to these places parallels the idea of the pilgrimage. Relating such journeys to pilgrimage, Laing & Crouch (2011) identify characteristics such as sacrifice, danger and hardship, personal transformation, enrichment of body and soul, and communitas, all of which enhance the spiritual significance of frontier tourism.

Overall, what we see is a situation where previous dichotomies that placed tourists and pilgrims in separate silos are no longer of use. Instead, we live in a postmodern reality where the fluidity of meaning rules. Within this, tourism, pilgrimage, religion, and spirituality mix in an ever changing manner, at both the individual and societal level. This does not mean that overarching concepts can never be achieved, but that they must be nuanced and fluid to match the complex reality of what they are trying to understand and depict.

3 A framework for understanding the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism in the contemporary era

The nexus between pilgrims and tourists is still in the midst of an on-going process of transformation (Collins-Kreiner, 2019). Thus, there is a need for a revised perspective to reinforce the dynamic nature of the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism. This paper argues that the rejuvenation and evolution of pilgrimage in contemporary tourism is manifested through three key elements: meaning, ritual and transformation (Part A in Fig. 1).

There is a deep intention and understanding of the core of pilgrimage – the *meaning*. Roos (2006, p. 17) claims the key to defining pilgrimage is its 'intent', which is the individual's 'sense of felt purpose', as depicted in Fig. 1, Part A. In the 21st Century, the world seems to feel just as strongly about pilgrimage as it ever has, but the conceptualization of it goes beyond religion to emphasize a new dimension: spirituality. This is in line with the recent trend in the separation of spirituality from religion (Liutikas, 2017; Nicolaides & Grobler, 2017; Di Giovine & Choe, 2019). Scholars agree that the pursuit of spiritual connection beyond the religion paradigm is a primary motivation for 21st Century pilgrims (Digance, 2006; Collins-Kreiner,

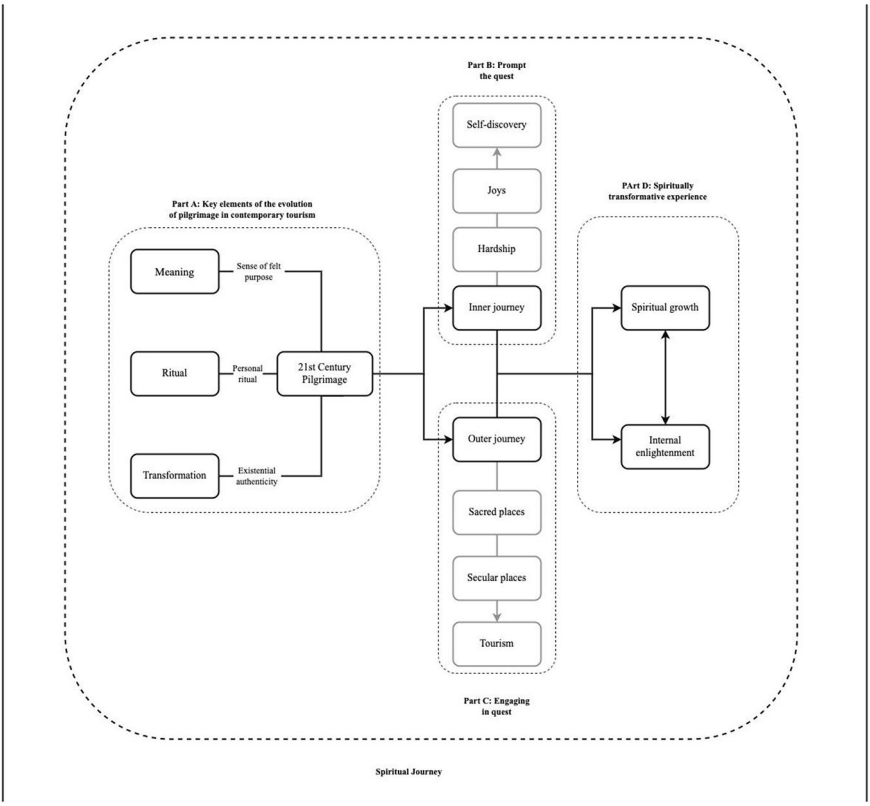

Fig. 1 A framework for understanding the relationship between pilgrimage and contemporary tourism

2010; Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2018; Di Giovine & Choe, 2019). This paper does not support Collins-Kreiner's (2019) argument that the rejuvenation process has caused pilgrimage travel to lose its unique attribute: its religious element. Her account was situated exclusively from a religious point of view, as for many, pilgrimage is a sacred journey and the sacred is often linked to religion. In recent times, 'religious' is not the only word that can be utilized to describe what is 'sacred'. In the contemporary world, many people define themselves as 'spiritual and religious' or 'spiritual but not religious'. They are highlighting their opposition to formalized or traditional religion, which for some people, is associated with authoritative, restrictive, and organized institutions. In comparison, the notion of spirituality refers to personal, privatized, and subjective experiences of the sacred (Vincett & Woodhead, 2016; Hill et al., 2000) reason that the rise of spirituality indicates increased respect for the inner or experiential dimension, contemplative practices of traditional religious systems. In this way, there continues to be a link between spirituality, religion, and pilgrimage.

For decades, travelling has been noted as an essential element of spiritual practices (Zahra & McIntosh, 2007; Sharpley, 2009, 2016; Willson et al., 2013; Zargham Boroujeny, 2017; Wang et al., 2021). However, the search for spiritual experiences

through travel goes far beyond the religious and/or spiritual tourism paradigms (Cheer et al., 2017). This is not surprising, because if one views spirituality as the essence of being, which involves an often transcendent quest for meaning, purpose, and connectedness (Wilson & Harris, 2006), then a variety of tourism experiences and products can be viewed as potential means to search for new spiritual experiences and deepen spiritual fulfilment (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005; Olsen & Timothy, 2006; Laing & Crouch, 2009, 2011; Matteucci, 2013; Freidus & Caro, 2021), as noted in the previous section. Accordingly, the current pilgrimage dialogue has evolved beyond the binary classifications of pilgrimage as either religious or secular to instead focus on the spiritual quest of the individual leading to transcendence or enlightenment (Warfield et al., 2014; Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2018; Collins-Kreiner, 2019).

Scholars have noted it is possible for a person to engage their spiritual side in nearly every touristic situation (Wilson & Harris, 2006; Sharpley, 2016). However, this does not imply all these tourism segments are part of the rejuvenation of pilgrimage in the contemporary world. The key to pilgrimage is ritual. It is evident that the concept of pilgrimages might differ within and between religions and civilizations. Yet despite its prominence and changing nature, the conceptualizations of pilgrimage can be seen to share the element of *ritual* – a term derived from the Latin word *ritus*, meaning religious practice or ceremony (Schnell & Pali, 2013). Indeed, Di Giovine (2013, p. 76, emphasis in original) noted that, like pilgrimage, tourism's "circular, return-oriented movement provides both with a similar ritual structure", which can be considered as a "*rite of passage* or a *rite of intensification*". This situation can be linked to Schnell's (2009) 'personal ritual,' which he defined as 'formalised patterns of action, pointing beyond the actual event at a particular meaning imbued by the actor' (as cited in Schnell & Pali 2013, p. 890). In other words, the key to rituals is the subjective ascription of personal meaning to the experience, as depicted in Fig. 1. Indeed, Hill et al., (2000) noted that anything can be spiritual to someone if through engaging in the associated ritual he or she experiences' transcendence or connection, or derives' deep personal meaning. As such, for the post-tourist, what is 'sacred' is the significance of the intent with which the *journey* is undertaken and the anticipated lasting impact of its completion (Leite & Graburn, 2009). Simply put, the power of the *journey* does not only lie in the.

> ritual nature of the journey, [but also in] the power of the special site [if a site is involved], [the] connection of the journey to powerful cultural myths, the social and spiritual connections established on the journey, and the transformative nature of the undertaking, including the transformation from illness to health (Dubisch & Winkelman, 2005, p. xv).

The healing process that can occur in this experience is not one that cures physical illnesses, though it can. Rather, it addresses human psychological and/or emotional health (Dubisch & Winkelman, 2005). In other words, a *journey* is a metaphor relating to an 'inner journey'. It can be said that the outer journey is the vehicle for the inner journey (Morgan, 2010), as depicted in Part A and Part B of Fig. 1. The outer journey provides the temporal-spatial interruptions from the daily routine that help to facilitate the inner journey, while the inner journey offers a range of meaning-

ful experiences from which psychological benefits, personal development and, most importantly, spiritual growth can be derived. Additional critical elements of ritual are the experience of *communitas*, referring to the social relationship and bond (Gothoni, 1993), and obstacles faced on the journey. Meeting and interacting with people along the journey may produce positive feelings of togetherness while challenges such as physical suffering, solitude and the experiencing of strong emotions function as catalysts of self-transformation (Frey, 1998; Freidus & Caro, 2021). In this context, the difference between a pilgrim and a tourist is the meaning in which communitas and the challenges are set. There may well be different depths of communitas between pilgrims and tourists. Whereas the communitas of pilgrims is of 'pure, ethereal, or all-encompassing unification', the communitas in tourism is of 'relative unification or bonding' (Matthews, 2008, p. 179). The former speaks of a deep and meaningful connection between the members of a group, whereas the latter expresses a more superficial bond (Polus & Carr, 2021). Likewise, the pilgrim sees the obstacles they encounter as a form of sacrifice and religious devotion, whereas for the tourist, these obstacles are seen as opportunities for personal growth and enhancement of inner spiritual fulfilment. In this context, pilgrimage travel offers tourists an opportunity to consider the meaning of life or their own lives, and their identity and outlook on the world. Indeed, Di Giovine (2013) noted many forms of contemporary tourism such as adventure tourism, volunteer tourism and eco-tourism are both physically and emotionally challenging.

The *transformative* or otherwise fulfilling experience is the most crucial part of pilgrimages. The outer and inner journeys that the pilgrims undergo (as depicted in Part B and Part C of Fig. 1), are critical elements in pilgrimage (Digance, 2006). The outer journey reminds the pilgrims that they are engaging in a quest, while the inner journey prompts the quest and search for meaning. Tourism and pilgrimage are linked where the journey has the potential power to transform human lives regardless of motive (Plate, 2009; Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2018). Indeed, using the term 'energy pilgrimage', Fedele (2014, p. 162) argues that "to understand these spiritual travelers it is important to take into account their own use of an energy discourse to make sense of their travel experiences and their focus on personal transformation".

Collins-Kreiner (2019, p. 145) argued that the conceptualization of pilgrimage in contemporary tourism is of a 'mobility for the search for meaning that contains an element of transformation that is often deep and enduring'. This view highlights the post-tourists as individuals who are afraid of 'being bound and fixed' (Baumann, 1996, p. 29) and 'transgresses established spaces of religiosity and seeks as well as ascribes alternative (usually individual and spiritual) meanings to sacred places' (Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2018, pp. 171–172). Such phenomena can be linked to the post-tourists' search for subjective authenticity (Cohen, 2008) stated, 'the veracity of the "objective" authenticity of attractions has been replaced by a growing concern with the tourists' experiences of "subjective" authenticity on their trip…resembling that found at the climax of intense erotic or religious experiences' (p. 332). In other words, post-tourists are seeking existential authenticity, which relates to 'personal or intersubjective feelings activated by the liminal process of tourist activities' (Wang, 1999: 351). Existential authenticity, according to Wang (1999: 352), 'can have nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects,' but refers to a 'potential existential

state of Being that is to be activated by tourist activities'. This implies that post-tourists are seeking 'profound' experiences which are similar to the so-called spiritual, sacred, or mystical experiences of the pilgrim, but are beyond the 'spiritual' settings of religious and/or spiritual tourism, or visits to formal or secular pilgrimage sites where externally imposed rituals dominate. Thus, the term pilgrimage is used to describe the contemporary tourism experience, not as a reference to any religion, but as a label for a different category of experience, in this case, a profound and spiritually transformative encounter with the potential for positive change in a tourist's life (as depicted in Part D of Fig. 1).

Based on the above analysis, the conceptualization of pilgrimage in contemporary tourism goes beyond the idea of a journey to a religious place, but this does not imply a replacement of pilgrimage by contemporary tourism. This paper has conceptualized pilgrimage in the contemporary world as a *spiritual journey* as depicted in Fig. 1. Part A in Fig. 1 is comprised of the three key elements of the evolution of pilgrimage in contemporary tourism. When combined with Part B, which is the inner journey that prompts the quest, and Part C which is the outer journey that is the actual physical movement, this becomes a spiritual journey that leads to a spiritually transformative experience. Hence, spiritual journey is described as a form of human behaviour involving a *journey* that can be sacred, secular, or a mixture of both, in search of spiritual growth or internal enlightenment which derives, not necessarily from the formal or secular pilgrimage sites, but from the hardships, joys and self-discovery experienced during the journey. In this paper, we have conceptualized the spiritual journey beyond the narrow window of religious pilgrimage, religious and/or spiritual tourism. Consequently, this paper adopts a contemporary definition of spirituality that while seeing links to religion is not beholden to it. In this way, the paper pushes forward understandings of contemporary pilgrimage and spirituality. This revisiting of an old phenomenon provides a different way of understanding the meaning of pilgrimage in the contemporary era and therefore how it relates to tourism.

4 Conclusions

The objective of this paper was to critically examine the re-emerging idea of pilgrimage through tourism in the contemporary era to reassess the relations between these two practices. The past may give us some evidence about what is going on, but it is time to look at the present if we are to build up a global picture of what pilgrimage and tourism mean in contemporary society. Pilgrimage and tourism often overlap and intertwine, generating spaces that set the stage for the ambiguity of travel *per se*. This paper has highlighted that in the 21st Century, the world seems to feel just as strongly about pilgrimage as it ever has, but the conceptualization of the pilgrimage goes beyond visiting formal or secular pilgrimage sites. This paper concluded that the concept of tourism, beyond the religious and/or spiritual tourism paradigms, in the contemporary world is very close to the concept of pilgrimage travel. Thus, the proposed conceptualization of pilgrimage in the contemporary world as a *spiritual journey*, as highlighted in Fig. 1, allows broader interpretations of pilgrimage travel

in different phenomena of tourism in the contemporary era, something which the work of Collins-Kreiner (2019) has suggested is necessary.

This paper calls for more research into exploring the inter-relationship between pilgrimage, spirituality and tourism, beyond the narrow window of religious and/or spiritual tourism. In doing so, the paper has rejected the old dichotomies and continuums that have previously been constructed to define and divide religion and tourism. Instead, recognising the fluid realities of the postmodern world and the spiritualties embedded within it the paper has called for the recognition of the complex interlinkages between tourism, religion, and spirituality that find a voice in the multifaceted nature of pilgrimage that we see around us today. Spirituality, as a personal construct, is a problematic and sensitive topic of study, because of its links to religion and faith, and its potentially transcendent nature. Despite this, it is a topic of immense importance. This is particularly true in the post-modern world where travel has emerged as a significant exercise in the growing spiritual marketplace because of the post-modern revolutions in the ways through which people are looking for peace and meaning in life, including through tourism.

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Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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