
REVIEW ARTICLES
ОГЛЯДИ

On the Importance of Communications in the Field of Pilgrimage and Religious Tourism as a Social and Communication Institution

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ABSTRACT

Pilgrimage is a social communication institution that plays a vital role in forming and strengthening social ties and communication among people. This form of travel has deep roots in religious traditions and reflects the human need for spirituality and the search for meaning in life. Pilgrimage involves traveling with the specific purpose of visiting a holy place or shrine to seek spiritual refreshment, appeal to higher powers, and perform religious rites or penance. This creates favorable conditions for interaction among people who share common beliefs and values. As a social communication institution, pilgrimage contributes to the formation of group identity and community, as people engaged in pilgrimage feel part of a larger community that unites their faith and goals. They communicate, share experiences, meet new people, and interact with residents and other pilgrims, which promotes the exchange of ideas, views, and mutual understanding. Additionally, pilgrimage creates opportunities for the development of social and communication skills. By interacting with different people, pilgrims learn to show tolerance, mutual respect, empathy, and understanding of other cultures and traditions. They acquire the skills of effective communication, the ability to listen and understand others, as well as identify themselves as part of the community. Therefore, pilgrimage, as a social and communication institution, promotes interaction between people, the formation of communities, and the development of social and communication skills. It creates a unique opportunity for communication, exchange of experience and knowledge, as well as deepening of spiritual development and enrichment of the life experience of each pilgrim.

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Паломництво, як соціальнокомунікаційний інститут, є явищем, яке відіграє важливу роль у формуванні та зміцненні соціальних зв'язків і спілкування між людьми. Ця форма подорожей має глибокі корені в релігійних традиціях і відображає потребу людей у духовності та пошуку сенсу життя. *Паломництво передбачає спеціальну мету подорожі* – відвідування святого місця або святині, щоб зазнати духовного освіження, звернутися до вищих сил, виконати релігійні обряди чи покаєння. Це створює сприятливі умови для взаємодії між людьми, які поділяють спільну віру та цінності. Паломництво, як соціальнокомунікаційний інститут, сприяє формуванню групової ідентичності та спільноти, оскільки люди, що займаються паломництвом, відчувають себе частиною більшої спільноти, яка об'єднує їх віру і цілі. Вони спілкуються, діляться досвідом, знайомляться з новими людьми, вступають у взаємодію з місцевими жителями та іншими паломниками, що сприяє обміну ідеями, поглядами та взаєморозумінню. Крім того, паломництво створює можливість для розвитку соціальних навичок та комунікаційних вмінь. У процесі спілкування з різними людьми, паломники навчаються виявляти толерантність, взаємоповагу, емпатію та розуміння різних культур і традицій. Вони набувають навичок ефективного спілкування, вміння слухати і розуміти інших, а також виявляти себе як частину спільноти. Отже, паломництво, як соціальнокомунікаційний інститут, сприяє взаємодії між людьми, формуванню спільнот, розвитку соціальних навичок та комунікаційних вмінь. Воно створює унікальну можливість для спілкування, обміну досвідом та знаннями, а також поглиблення духовного розвитку та збагачення життєвого досвіду кожного паломника.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА: комунікаційні стратегії, комунікаційні джерела, паломництво, релігійний туризм, соціальнокомунікаційний простір, соціальнокомунікаційний інститут.

Introduction

Literature Review.

The theoretical and methodological foundation of the paper is contemporary studies in the field of social communications, pilgrimage and religious tourism: V. Rizun (Rizun, 2008; 2022), R. Stefko, S. Jenčová, E. Litavkova (Štefko, Jenčová, & Litavcová, 2013), A. Kiralova, M. Mudrik (Štefko, Kiráľová, & Mudrik, 2015), Y. Zelenyuk (Zelenyuk, 2013), I. Kudinova (Kudinova, 2023), V. Volovyk (Volovyk, 2023), L. Ataman (Ataman, 2023), M. Komleva (Komleva, 2023), V. Kochan (Kochan, 2023), P. Penyak (Penyak, 2023), H. Labinska (Labinska, 2023), V. Tsivaty (Tsivaty, 2023), I. Panova (Panova, 2023), S. Panchenko (Panchenko, 2022).

Problem Statement.

The spiritual cleansing power of pilgrimage to holy places is widely acknowledged. However, it is equally essential that participants in these pilgrimages develop a sense of community through prayer. Researchers in religious tourism (Ambrosio, 2015; Amaro, Antunes, & Henriques, 2018; Vidal-González, & Capsí, 2023) have noted that for many pilgrims, the journey itself with a group of like-minded individuals is more significant than the actual performance of ritual rites upon reaching the destination or receiving a sermon about righteous living. Communication with fellow

pilgrims holds immense spiritual value during liturgies, visits to shrines, joint prayers, spiritual chants, and general spiritual practices. Therefore, communication is of great importance during pilgrimages as it unites like-minded individuals on a spiritual level and provides an opportunity to get to know each other and discuss the reasons for embarking on sacred journeys (praying for relatives, for their country, for healing from fatal diseases, for resolving vital issues). During the pilgrimage itself, pilgrims pray to the Lord, the Mother of God, Angels, Archangels, and the Holy Family to help them forget events that hinder their progress in their life journey. These events may include the death of loved ones, difficult family members, workplace challenges, suicidal thoughts, depression, war-induced issues and implications, lack of self-acceptance, abuse and bullying in a family and society, social rejection, spiritual weakness, and other struggles. The communication between clergy, priests, mentors, and pilgrims is crucial across various denominations since sometimes pilgrims do not achieve the expected results from their pilgrimage due to a lack of communication or miscommunication between the clergy and the pilgrims (Panchenko, 2022, pp. 55-61). It can also contribute to why the pilgrimage does not yield the desired results. Moreover, conflicts and fanaticism may arise between religious groups and denominations during the pilgrimage. There may also be reluctance among pilgrim groups to interact with each other and clashes between the locals and pilgrims. Therefore, these issues have psychological implications. As the social and communicative aspects of pilgrimage become more prominent, questions about the psychological nature of pilgrimage as a phenomenon arise (Panchenko, 2019).

This paper aims to examine pilgrimage and religious tourism in the context of social communication proceeding from the recent research of both foreign and Ukrainian scholars who have explored this topic to demonstrate the enduring significance of pilgrimage, particularly during wars, disasters, and diseases. It aims to show that pilgrimage has been a consistent feature of society for centuries and continues to evolve in academic discourse, highlighting its resilience as a social and communicative institution. The author emphasizes the relevance of pilgrimage in modern life, often characterized by crises and risks rather than religious and righteous events. Additionally, the author underscores that scholars from various fields analyze pilgrimage from a communication perspective. The extensive coverage of this phenomenon by different academic disciplines, especially communication studies, suggests that pilgrimage has become an integral part of social communication and a distinct social communication institution (Rizun, 2022).

Method

The article utilizes cultural, religious, communication, and tourism research methods to analyze the issue of pilgrimage and religious tourism in the social and communication context. It also explores the significance of these phenomena from the perspective of social communication institutionalization. The author covers pilgrimage from the social and communication angle, drawing on findings from various fields of study. Additionally, the author analyzes articles that view pilgrimage from cultural, religious, tourism, communication, economic, psychological, and other perspectives, showing how this phenomenon is evolving.

The author has also employed historical, systemic, and informational approaches to make the content more accessible to a larger audience from various fields of study and to pique the interest of different social groups. These approaches are represented in the text with a chronological analytical scheme for the analysis of contemporary literature (the 2013-2023 period). Owing to various fields and scientific directions, pilgrimage has drawn the attention of scientists across academic disciplines and united scholars around the phenomenon.

Results

In this section, I will discuss the results and findings of various contemporary scientists from different fields in relation to pilgrimage and religious tourism from a communication perspective.

The article "*Selected Aspects of Marketing Pilgrimage Sites*" (Štefko, Jenčová, & Litavcová, 2013), published in *The Polish Journal of Management Studies*, focuses on the popularization of Marian shrines (Mariology being the theological science of the Virgin Mary in Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant theology) in Slovakia through mass communication. The authors stress the importance of using communication channels to attract pilgrims to Slovakia, citing the example of neighboring Poland, where the pilgrimage is well-organized and attracts around half a million people annually. They also mention Yasna Hora in Częstochowa, Poland, the most popular Marian shrine, annually visited by approximately 4 million people.

The Black Madonna image has a fascinating history. In 988, the image was brought to Kyiv and served as a model for the first ancient Rus icon painters. Later, the image was relocated to Belz, and then, around 1382, the Polish prince Władysław transported the "Mother of God Belzka" to Częstochowa, where it became known as "Częstochowa". Annually, thousands of Roman Catholic pilgrims visit Yasna Hora in Częstochowa to pray before this icon (Pyrig, 2009, pp. 167-173). Poland has around 500 pilgrimage sites, with 430 associated with the veneration of the Virgin Mary. Poles are known as a nation of pilgrims who respect and preserve their traditions and religious heritage. They also promote this tradition through effective communication, advertising, and funding scientific research.

Therefore, the article "*Strategic Marketing Communication in Pilgrimage Tourism*" (Štefko, Kiráľová, & Mudřík, 2015, pp. 423-430) focuses on Slovak Marian shrines and explores the role of advertising and media in promoting pilgrimage. This study builds on previous work on the communication aspects of Marian shrines in Slovakia.

In this article, Štefko, Kiráľová, & Mudřík examine pilgrimage tourism in Slovakia from a communications perspective. Slovakia has the potential for pilgrimage tourism due to its historical context and numerous destinations of interest to both domestic and foreign visitors. However, the development of pilgrimage and religious tourism in Slovakia is retarded by deficiencies in marketing communications, infrastructure, and other areas. The researchers conducted a questionnaire survey to assess the current situation with marketing communications in pilgrimage tourism and built two hypotheses to guide their research.

The study used the Single-Factor Analysis of Variance ANOVA to investigate the relationship between the dependent variable and an interval variable set to one. The homogeneity of variance was tested using the Bartlett and Levine test. Based on the analysis results, the article provided recommendations for developing a communication strategy. The first hypothesis stated: H1: There are statistically significant differences in the level of awareness about religious, cultural heritage, and pilgrimage depending on the preferred source of information.

The independent variable was the most common source of information about the tourist destination (1 – Internet, 2 – travel agencies, 3 – personal recommendations from acquaintances, 4 – television/radio, 5 – newspapers/magazines). The dependent variable was the level of awareness about religious and cultural pilgrimage sites, rated on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – being completely unaware, 5 – being fully informed). Since the study examined the relationship between the dependent and the nominal interval variable, it utilized the Single-Factor Analysis of Variance ANOVA.

The sample was initially divided into groups based on the primary source of information. It was important for the observations within those groups to be independent, as this was a necessary provision for one of the applied analysis methods. The homogeneity of variance was then tested using the Bartlett and Levine tests. Summary statistics were calculated using Minitab®16 Statistical Software. The criterion for homogeneity of variance for the Bartlett and Levine test was calculated at a level that ensured the p-value was higher than the significance level used for testing (i.e., $\alpha = 0.05$, or 5%, respectively). As a result, the variance was confirmed to be homogeneous, allowing them to proceed with the descriptive statistics for the surveyed group.

In another article, the authors explained that communication in religious and pilgrimage tourism targets a specific group of visitors interested in completing a pilgrimage. Word of mouth, which involves verbal communication between suppliers, independent experts, family, friends, and

visitors, plays a significant role. Additionally, blog sites featuring stories about visits to religious sites, cultural heritage, pilgrimage, or special events can be influential. To encourage pilgrimage blog content should be detailed to help readers envision the journey and prepare for their own. Websites can provide virtual tours of places of worship. International networks for religious individuals, religious TV channels, and radio stations can also disseminate relevant information to visitors. Church publications, brochures, tourist guides, and public relations should be used to communicate and inspire desire, motivation, and faith in the desired results of the trip. Lesser-known destinations and sites in Slovakia should utilize various marketing tools, including online communication, to engage with visitors. The limited financial resources of both destinations and visitors to Slovakia, as well as the widespread availability and relatively low cost of the Internet, will make this medium dominant in strategic interactive communication with visitors.

For this, all appropriate communication channels should be used. Previous attempts to promote religious and pilgrimage sites, carried out by individual organizations, did not have a systematic approach. Strategic communication should focus on raising awareness, strengthening the image, targeting a specific market, and increasing global publicity of the religious, cultural heritage, and pilgrimage sites of Slovakia. According to the authors, a part of strategic communication should include comprehensive information about the historical significance, events, amusing details, and attractiveness of the visited sites and destinations.

The following platforms are the most suitable for this purpose: *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Pinterest*, and *Foursquare*. Engaging with visitors through the increasingly popular social network *Foursquare* provides new opportunities for destinations and sites. *Foursquare* is primarily used as a mobile application and is linked to geolocation services. In Slovakia, it is being increasingly utilized for sharing location information with friends registered on the network. The authors recommend that designers of religious, cultural-historical, and pilgrimage websites create their own websites. Focusing on a specific site provides access to statistics and the ability to run promotions, attract visitor attention, and more. Users who visit these destinations and check in automatically inform their friends about their location, which helps spread information about the destination even to those who may not be interested otherwise.

Strategic communication can be challenging, especially for religious, cultural, and pilgrimage sites. They need to invest in promoting themselves both online and offline, utilizing social media. Success in strategic communication depends on creativity, innovation, and a good understanding of social media. Providing relevant information about the destination, monitoring social media conversations, and building relationships with visitors are crucial steps that destinations and facilities, such as those in Slovakia, should take to gain the loyalty and trust of visitors (Štefko, Kiráľová, & Mudrik, 2015, pp. 423-430).

In his article "*Religious Tourism as a Communication Education's Means of the Human Personality*," Zelenyuk discusses religious tourism and pilgrimage and communication. Zelenyuk emphasizes that religious trips and pilgrimages not only impact the individual tourist in terms of information and communication but also have an influence on the larger society. Through tourists, the communicative influence of religious buildings is spread, with objects of worship acting as subjects of communication. The communicative essence of religious tourism lies in the potential for the spiritual enrichment of the traveler. From this perspective, religious buildings are not only objects of tourist communication but also its subjects. After returning from a trip, tourists often share their experiences, transmitting spiritual values and meanings to those around them. The essence of tourism is that a person as a perceiving subject, becomes the direct recipient of something new following a journey. In this case, the purpose of the journey, i.e. the destination, becomes the object of the tourist's perception as a recipient (Rizun, 2008). A tourist on a journey is a subject, an active recipient in communication. The author of the article discusses the impact of religious tourism on information and communication, outlining the following links: the tourist's understanding of the value of the attraction, the organization of the journey in accordance with its purpose, awareness of historical and cultural background related to the attraction, the formation of an overall

impression of the journey, the evaluation of whether the purpose was achieved, and the integration of symbolic meanings, cultural codes, and symbols associated with the attraction into the tourist's life. The author provides examples such as the "Chalice" icon being a safeguard against alcoholism, myrrh symbolizing abundance, and holy water representing holiness in the home (Zelenyuk, 2013, pp. 88-89).

The recent international conference "*Sacred and Tourism*" held on April 28, 2023, in Kyiv, became a significant achievement for the scholars of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, who delved into the topic, giving special attention to communications in pilgrimage and religion tourism. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the works directly related to pilgrimage, religious tourism, and communications appears relevant here.

In her work "*Religious Tourism: The Essence and Prospects of Development*" (*Sacred and Tourism*, 2023, pp. 206-208), Kudinova notes that during a pilgrimage, there is often communication between many people from different cultures. For a long time, the Way of St. James has been used to exchange ideas, artistic styles, and cultural traits of different countries. Today, this path is the main cultural and religious route of Europe. In an individualistic society where face-to-face communication is decreasing, pilgrimage plays a communicative role and promotes unity among people.

Volovyk & Ataman explore the concept of liminality in their study "*The Sacred Concept of Liminality*" (*Sacred and Tourism*, 2023, pp. 21-24). They discuss the idea of a liminal "place outside physical space" for geographical and sacred research, which refers to a transitional posthumous state involving a location in the afterlife. This concept includes components beyond the boundaries of space and time. For example, the authors analyze Limbo or Purgatory, terms in Christian eschatology that describe the state and place of souls as an intermediate state between Heaven and Hell. The article argues that the liminal approach is an experience of the sacred and a significant way in which the liminal experience acquires symbolism, sacralization, interpretation, and voice.

In her article "*Sacred in the Sites of Geotourism of Ukraine*" (*Sacred and Tourism*, 2023, pp. 94-97), Komleva discusses the concept of the sacred and its perception in relation to communications and religious systems. She highlights how the development of civilization, religious systems, and communications has led to natural objects such as mountains (Olympus, Fujiyama, Himalayas) and river landscapes (the Nile, Ganges) becoming sacred through associations with ancestors, founders of religions, prophets, and saints. Over time, the territories of ethnic groups, ancestor cults, native landscapes, and sacralized history have transformed into the Holy Land for the ancient Egyptians, Jews, and Japanese. It emphasizes the importance of natural landscapes in geotourism destinations. By correlating these elements and adding new natural components, it is possible to recreate the implementation of a certain meta-project preceding the emergence of man, human societies, ethoses, and states. This approach aligns with the sequence described in the Old Testament. The author suggests that this understanding can be valuable when selecting geotourism sites and planning travel routes.

In their collaborative work "*Peculiarities of the Creation of a Tourist Cluster Based on the Sacred Architecture of Mizhhirshchyna (Khust District of Zakarpattia Oblast)*" (*Sacred and Tourism*, 2023, pp. 172-176), Kochan & Penyak examined the sacred architecture of Mizhhirshchyna. They found that with the advancement of telecommunication services, it is feasible to promote a tourist product in the tourism market. They highlighted that tourists, besides fulfilling their spiritual needs, also require everyday amenities. These include accommodation, eating places, transport accessibility to sacred architecture sites, telecommunication services, banking and financial services, tourist information centers with excursion services, and advertising and souvenir products. A notable aspect of creating a tourist cluster is a coordination center, which serves as a link between the local population and management institutions. Only the interaction of all these elements could secure the effective functioning of the tourist cluster.

In her paper "*Experience of Implementing IT as a Tool for Preserving the Sacred Heritage of Ukraine*" (*Sacred and Tourism*, 2023, pp. 215-219), Labinska presents the projects that utilize the achievements of the Ukrainian IT industry in the sacred sphere. Ukraine is well-known as a global IT hub, offering high-quality expertise for global financial technology markets. The Ukrainian IT industry provides services in areas such as Big Data, telecommunications, and cloud services. The implementation of IT has led to the emergence of new forms of territorial organization within society. The scholar emphasizes that the application of IT is increasingly diversifying globally. There is a growing demand for IT products from society, as they not only optimize processes, save time, and offer non-standard solutions but also create potential for real income by designing original products. IT products can help preserve historical memory, especially in the case of sacred sites that Ukraine has lost due to the war. Technologies such as FacePay24 can aid in identifying visitors to sacred sites, particularly in times of frequent reports of false alarms regarding potential threats. Additionally, the implementation of intelligent transport systems in Ukraine has the potential to enhance the logistics of tourist and pilgrimage flows.

In his article "*Religious Tourism and Tourist Diplomacy in the Conditions of Globalization Processes of the 21st Century: International and Institutional Discourses*" (*Sacred and Tourism*, 2023, pp. 254-258), Tsviaty also discusses the significance of communications in the field of religious tourism. He identifies five main groups of motivations that guide modern tourists: cultural and cognitive, spiritual (insight, enlightenment, atonement), healing, the desire to feel part of the spiritual space, and hedonistic motivations. The scholar suggests that religious tourism can contribute to the institutional development of regional territories affected by global cataclysms and help prevent social and communication problems. He emphasizes the importance of religious tourism and religious diplomacy as significant factors in the socio-cultural development of society in the globalized landscape of the 21st century. The author concludes that today the concept of "hospitality" has high international and political, political and diplomatic, tourist, and social significance, especially in the fields of public and cultural diplomacy, public information space, and intercultural communication.

In the work "*The Role of Marketing in the Promotion of Pilgrimage and Religious Tours*" (*Sacred and Tourism*, 2023, pp. 287-289) Panova describes innovations in the marketing of pilgrimage and religious tours through communications. The author explains that pilgrimage and religious tourism have always been popular among tourists and have had a significant impact on the cultural and religious fabric of states and regions. Effective promotion of these sites and their historical significance has resulted in an increase in tourist flows. Public relations play a vital role in organizing tourism activities by creating and maintaining a positive image of pilgrimage and religious tourism among the public. The main goal of public relations is to influence public opinion by informing people about the history and significance of these types of tourism, as well as the importance of tourist sites for society. Public relations tools include relations with the public, organizing events for the mass media, etc.

Marketing and tourist initiatives alone are not sufficient to open a sacred tourism destination without the presence of true sacredness. Modern communication and psychological techniques can be used to create advertising and marketing myths. However, true sacredness is developed over time or under the influence of conditions within the realm of the sacred, which goes beyond ordinary and comprehensible phenomena. The development of sacredness is linked to the high spiritual, moral, and ethical principles of humans and thus does not allow for the use of commercial and marketing methods. Nevertheless, sacred tourism can and should be integrated into the overall concept of urban and regional development, as its spiritual aspect is not in conflict but in harmony with the social and economic objectives of territory growth.

In her research "*On the Question of Pilgrimage Literature as a Form of Communication During Sacred Journeys*" Panchenko highlighted the significance of pilgrimage guides as a powerful communication tool for sacred journeys. She also provided examples of specialized fiction, documentaries, and feature films on the subject, which serve as motivators for undertaking sacred journeys.

Pilgrimage guides and books offer ample information, inspiration, and ideas for organizing own journeys or retracing the paths of others. Therefore, the coverage of this topic is relevant from the perspective of social communication. To encourage pilgrimage numerous guidebooks, itineraries – travel descriptions were compiled, many of which later became important historical sources. After analyzing the necessary communication sources, the author concluded that the topic warrants further exploration of the phenomenon of pilgrimage within the social and communication context (*Sacred and Tourism*, 2023, pp. 252-254).

The conference “*Sacred and Tourism*” has demonstrated the importance of studying pilgrimage and religious tourism as a social and communicative institution with its rules, norms, laws, and functions, even during challenging times for Ukraine. Scholars from various fields, including economics, history, geography, cultural studies, social sciences, religious studies, and linguistics, focus on this topic and recognize its communicative aspect, which has not yet been thoroughly investigated and described in the scientific community.

Conclusion

In this article, the author analyzes the works of foreign and Ukrainian scientists who have directly or indirectly discussed pilgrimage and religious tourism within the framework of social communication. While reviewing scientific reports, articles, monographs, dissertations, and specialized magazines on religious tourism, the author found that this area has not been thoroughly studied and requires a comprehensive review and careful analysis. The author also suggests that further examination of pilgrimage literature, documentaries, feature films, diaries, memoirs, and interviews of pilgrims is necessary as this area continues to evolve and encompass new scientific directions. The issue of pilgrimage and religious tourism in the social and communication space has been explored through cultural, religious, communication, and tourism methods. The author has also developed analytical schemes for contemporary literature (from 2013 to 2023) and has observed the increasing interest in pilgrimage among scientists from various fields and scientific directions related to the social communication platform. The active scientific engagement in the topic is evident through international conferences, round tables, defended dissertations, international scientific projects, publications of monographs, manuals, and textbooks, as well as university courses. It indicates the sustained development of the topic “*Pilgrimage and Religious Tourism*” even in challenging conditions, particularly within the social and communication realms.

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