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# A Possible Synergy between Culture and Religion for the Sustainability of Tourism of Pompeii

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**Abstract:** Tourism scholars and players of the sector alike are very interested in the motivations for the tourist's journey, as they influence the demand—with regard to the choice of the destination and the organization of the trip—and the offer—with regard to the definition of the tourism product. Religious tourism is an important area of the scientific debate on the motivation to travel; part of the literature clearly distinguishes the cultural and laical motivation of tourists (which can be considered religious tourism) from the desire to live an experience of faith (pilgrimage), while today, the orientation of scholars is to bring back under the label “religious” spiritual, religious, and cultural motivations. This study analyzes the case of the city of Pompeii, and it aims to investigate the possible synergy that could be created between the historical-cultural and religious interests of the city, identifying possible strategies for sustainable tourism. The study develops a quali-quantitative analysis of the reviews of the “Pontifical Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii” on TripAdvisor and presents a content analysis on the most frequent words utilized by users to describe their touristic experience.

**Keywords:** cultural tourism; religious tourism; Pompeii; content analysis; TripAdvisor

## 1. Introduction

The literature on tourism is very interested in the motivations for the tourist's journey. In particular, for religious tourism there is a lively debate on the definition of the topic [1–6].

Religious journeys are not an emerging phenomenon; religion, the oldest form of noneconomic travel, is still one of the reasons that drives people to travel today [7]. Considering its economic potential—according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in 2016, 27% [8] of international tourist arrivals (about 333 million) were traveling to visit friends and relatives, for religious reasons and pilgrimages, for health treatments, etc.—the places of pilgrimage are beginning to be considered a tourism resource that can be enjoyed by travelers interested in cultural and historical sites [6]. Nowadays, there are many tourists who attend churches, basilicas, cathedrals, mosques, temples, etc., in order to admire their architectural beauties and works of art, driven more by cultural than spiritual reasons [9–12]. On the other hand, contemporary pilgrims seek and appreciate other aspects of the destination, enriching their experience of faith with its cultural contents.

All of this led us to reflect on the potential synergy between cultural and religious usable for the purposes of sustainable tourism of a destination [13–15]: in fact, there are destinations that offer a variety of attractions that are not systematized, which aim to “satisfy” a particular profile of tourists (for example, religious, cultural, food and wine, or ludic tourist) without considering the opportunity to create a tourist offer that can serve more types of tourists with different needs [16].

This is what happens in Pompeii, an Italian municipality of the metropolitan city of Naples known throughout the world for its historical-cultural dimensions. Here, the historical-cultural profile of

tourism is preponderant, and every year the Archaeological Park of Pompeii attracts millions of visitors. According to the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism (in Italian, Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo—MiBACT) it is the second most visited “place of culture” in Italy [17]. In addition, Pompeii has one of the most important and visited Marian sanctuaries in Italy, the Pontifical Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii (hereafter Basilica of Pompeii or Basilica), which attracts about 2 million faithful a year [18]. However, only a fraction (about 20%) visit both the ruins and the Basilica, with negative repercussions in terms of overnight stays (less than 2 nights) [18]. This is due to both the different motivations that are at the foundation of the journey and to the location of the touristic destination: most of the visitors of the Basilica are of Italian origin, while the archaeological site attracts tourists mostly from extra-local origin, with a strong foreign component [19].

In light of this, and considering that the interaction between these two places is not fully developed, could religious tourism create synergy with cultural tourism in order to contribute to the sustainable development of the city and increase the number of overnight stays in it? The objective of this research is to answer this question by analyzing the phenomenon of religious tourism in Pompeii and reflecting on possible development strategies for the sustainability of Pompeii’s tourism. Although sustainable development covers various aspects of a destination (including the economic, sociocultural, and environmental) [20,21], this work will focus on the economic aspect, in the awareness that dimensions should be examined together.

After a brief review of the current theoretical framework on religious tourism and a presentation of the city of Pompeii and its tourism, the work presents a quali-quantitative analysis of the reviews of the Basilica of Pompeii on TripAdvisor, a travel web portal that publishes user reviews about hotels, bed and breakfasts, apartments, restaurants, and tourist attractions. Finally, the work discusses the results and presents the main conclusions, including the limitations of the study and the future development of the research.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Religious Tourism: Spirituality, Culture, and Experience

In the literature, there is a lively debate on the phenomenon of religious tourism, with opposing positions even on defining aspects, both on the relationship between religious tourism and pilgrimage and between religious tourism and cultural tourism [22–28]. Pilgrimage and religious tourism have in common the particularity of the destination, that is, the places of spirituality and culture. These are appreciated by the pilgrims for their facilitation of meditation and spirituality and by the religious tourists for their cultural value.

In essence, the part of the literature that distinguishes between pilgrimage and religious tourism holds that the difference lies in the motivation to travel: the pilgrimage is generally understood as a journey in search of the truth, of what is “holy” or “sacred” [12], while for religious tourism, the motivation is the thirst for knowledge. In this context, the profile of the pilgrim is different from that of the religious tourist.

The new tendency diminishes the difference between pilgrims and religious tourists and considers pilgrimage as a form of tourism [23]. It is not possible to separate the profiles of the religious tourist from that of the pilgrim, because the latter is able to appreciate other contents of the trip, whether cultural, relational, or simple entertainment [29], and it is not excluded that the religious tourist can also experience strong emotions during his visit to these sites [10,30,31]. In general, the religious tourist is considered an individual who, attracted by particular destinations, is able to enrich his travel experience with more types of content (faith, culture, etc.). The new profile of the religious tourist is well suited to the new necessity of a society, generally understood, in search of emotional, educational, and social experiences, which allows them to understand the culture, the traditions, and the values of the places he visits [29,32,33].

The reality is that many religious sites are frequented more by tourists than by pilgrims and that these places are being organized to create a tourist offer like any other destination [9–12]. In truth, many religious sites are also an integral part of the historical, artistic, and cultural heritage of a territory. Moreover, there are many examples of tourist offers that are a mix of cultural, relational, and faith-based elements. By way of example, at the Basilica of Saint Peter in Vatican City it is practically impossible to distinguish the pilgrims from the tourists, while at the Way of Saint James of Compostela the spiritual and religious motivations for traveling are well combined with natural, cultural, and social motivations. These destinations appear complex, and the motivation to travel is the desire to live an “enriching” experience from various points of view: spiritual, cultural, and relational. Furthermore, it should be considered that the religious travel uses the same pattern as the other tourist group, both for the means it uses and for its organization. In this context, the motivations and activities undertaken by travelers have little to do with whether a person is a tourist or not: the pilgrimage, in fact, has the same general characteristics in terms of travel patterns, transportation, services, and infrastructure [6]. Apart from the devotional aspect, it includes trips and tourist visits to places that are not religious [34] in which pilgrims take part in typical touristic activities, dress as tourists, and make similar purchases [30]. In fact, the religious sites that host a significant number of tourists create simultaneity of sacred and laical places.

From this brief excursus emerges the idea that religious tourism could have a specific role for the economic, social, and cultural growth of the territory.

## 2.2. Case Study: The City of Pompeii

Pompeii is known throughout the world for the remains of the ancient city buried under the ashes of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE. These are the best preserved ruins of a Roman city: along with the remains of buildings, the archaeological excavations of Pompeii have provided various findings that have been fundamental to understanding life, customs, traditions, and art habits of Roman civilization. Due to its importance, the archaeological site of Pompeii has been a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage Site since 1997 [35].

In 2018, the archaeological site of Pompeii exceeded 3 million visitors, making it the second most visited state museum in Italy after the archaeological circuit of the Colosseum, Roman Forum, and Palatine Hill. More precisely, the archaeological area of Pompeii has experienced a 7.78% increase in visitors, from 3,383,415 admissions in 2017 to 3,646,585 in 2018 [17].

Table 1 shows the arrivals and the presences in Pompeii from 2008 to 2015 [18]. Although the report is from 2018, the data are updated to 2015; however, the trend from 2008 to 2015 provides insight for understanding the growth tendency of arrivals (understood as the number of customers hosted in hospitality establishments during the period considered) and presences (number of nights spent by customer in hospitality establishments) in Pompeii.

**Table 1.** Arrival and presences in Pompeii.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Arrivals	71,050	72,323	86,873	93,897	104,667	104,893	109,376	120,078
Presences	132,398	130,633	165,663	175,047	198,663	197,432	208,062	230,969
Overnight stays	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9

The consistency of arrivals rapidly increased from 2008 onwards, with an overall increase recorded in 2015, about 41% higher than 2008. The number of presences showed a similar trend, increasing from about 131,000 to about 231,000. The average stay, less than 2 days, has not changed.

The arrivals and presences in Pompeii by origin of the visitors are presented in Table 2 [18].

In 2015, the number of domestic visitors to Pompeii is greater than that of international tourists. However, international tourists stay in the city longer than the domestic, confirming that a substantial

part of the latter prefers a daily excursion to the Pompeian site, without benefiting from the most comprehensive tourist product offered by the city.

**Table 2.** Arrival and presences in Pompeii by origin in 2015.

	Domestic	International	Domestic	International
Arrivals	65,516	54,562	56.6	45.4
Presences	114,500	116,469	49.6	50.4
Overnight stays	1.75	2.13		

In fact, Pompeii is not only an archaeological site, but also one of the main hubs of the Marian itineraries of Italy and Europe, thanks to the presence of the Pontifical Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii, the construction of which started in 1876 on the initiative of the lawyer Bartolo Longo, beatified for his work by Pope John Paul II [18]. Inside the Basilica is the picture of the “Virgin of the Rosary with the Child”, revered by pilgrims from all over the world. Twice a year is recited the “Supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii:”, written by Blessed Bartolo Longo in 1883: on the first Sunday of October, the month of the Rosary, and May 8<sup>th</sup>, which is the anniversary of the installation of the first stone of the Basilica.

The Basilica of Pompeii attracts about 2 million faithful a year [18]. Specifically, in 2006, the number of pilgrims was 267,806, of which 259,743 (92%) were Italians and 8063 (8%) were foreign. In 2016, there was an increase of foreign visitors from 8% to 13.5%. More specifically, 79% of the Italians came from Southern Italy and the Islands, 17% from the Center, and 4% from the regions of Northern Italy. At the regional level, the highest rates came from Campania (55%), Puglia (11%), and Lazio (9%). International flows of visitors, on the other hand, came mainly from Poland (over 42%), the United States of America (20%), and South Korea (7%) [18].

Considering the touristic offer of Pompeii and the data on visitors, the number of overnight stays appears to be the only weakness. It is evident how difficult it is for the local establishments to ensure that tourists visiting Pompeii stay in the city. In fact, it is a daily destination for tourists staying in Naples or in the Campania coastal area.

The objective of the research presented in this paper is to understand the potential of creating a tourism offer that puts historical-cultural and religious resources in a system, with the aim of utilizing the opportunity deriving from the high number of tourists interested in the ruins to increase the number of overnight stays in the city and thus trigger the virtuous circle of sustainable tourism.

### 3. Materials and Methods

The work develops exploratory research and aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the attractors of Pompeii that could create a synergy with the historical-cultural ones in order to contribute to the sustainable development of the city?
- What are the interests of the tourists that must be taken into consideration for the creation of a sustainable touristic offer?

The work develops a quali-quantitative study on the reviews of Pompeii present on TripAdvisor, a tourist community aimed at sharing travel experiences between tourists. TripAdvisor is a rating site that is based on reviews that travelers make of accommodations, restaurants, or attractions. It has greatly influenced the dynamics of the sector: before organizing a trip, the tourist goes on TripAdvisor’s platform to retrieve as much information as possible; after the trip, they have the opportunity to share their experience with other travelers. The study of online reviews is the focus of many tourism scholars because they are important not only for tourists, but also for professionals in order to understand their reputation and improve their offers.

The research takes into consideration the first 10 Things-to-Do in Pompeii and focuses on the Pontifical Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Rosary, ranked second for number of

reviews in Pompeii, after the archaeological site. The sample under investigation consists of all the 1677 reviews of the Basilica of Pompeii on TripAdvisor (data updated to 8th February 2019). The first phase of research, aimed at achieving a basic profiling of the visitor of the Basilica, consists of a descriptive analysis of the “year of review” and the “geographic origin” of the user who wrote the review. The second is made up of a content analysis, one of numerous research methods used to analyze text data through a systematic classification process, involving coding and identifying themes [36,37]. It can be defined as a technique to compress key words or key phrases systematically and in a replicable way into a few content categories, allowing one to sift through large volumes of data with relative ease in a methodical way [38]. Content analysis is often based on a word-frequency count because it is assumed that the words more repeated contain the greatest concerns [38]. Through it the most frequent words in the reviews are highlighted in order to understand the interests of those who visit the Basilica. Next, the same analysis is repeated only on the reviews that contain the word “excavation/ruin” in order to understand if a relationship exists between the latter and the Basilica.

### 3.1. Sample and Data Collection

The starting point of this analysis is the following question: what are the other attractions in addition to the ruins? In other words, which other form of tourism could support the cultural-historical tourism of the city in order to contribute to its sustainable development?

The answer to this question comes from the analysis of TripAdvisor’s Things-to-Do in Pompeii, which includes 80 main attractions [39]. The first monument is Pompeii’s archeological area, followed by Pompeii’s Forum, Villa dei Misteri, and the Basilica of Pompeii. Table 3 shows the first 10 “Things-to-Do” in Pompeii according to TripAdvisor’s ranking of traveler reviews.

**Table 3.** First 10 Things-to-Do in Pompeii.

	Pompeii’s Attraction	N° of Reviews
1	Archeological area	19,641
2	Forum	1077
3	Villa dei Misteri	1001
4	Basilica of Pompeii	1677
5	Teatro Grande	750
6	Stabian Baths (Terme Stabiane)	370
7	Casa del Fauno	445
8	Lupanar	469
9	Bosco de Medici Winery	133
10	Pompei (moderna)	191

All of the attractions are part of the Roman archeological site of Pompeii, except for the Basilica of Pompeii, a Marian shrine that is a 750-meter walk from the ruins, and Bosco de Medici Winery, a restaurant/winery which is about 2 kilometers away from the archeological site (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Map of Pompeii’s main attractions [40].



According to the TripAdvisor rankings (Table 3), the Basilica of Pompeii is the fourth “Thing-to-Do” in Pompeii, with 1677 reviews, while Bosco de Medici Winery (9th) has just 133 reviews. The latter, although included as a tourist attraction, is a winery and considering the fact that it has few reviews (they are about 148 time less frequent than those of the ruins of Pompeii), it has not been considered in the analysis.

Could the religious tourism be the driving factor, and, together with the historical-cultural tourism, contribute to the sustainable development of the city?

As shown in Table 1, the archaeological site has a greater number of reviews, about 12 times more than that of the Basilica. This means that the majority of the ruins’ visitors do not also see the Basilica.

For this reason, the work focuses on the analysis of the online travel reviews posted on TripAdvisor by travelers (tourists and pilgrims) who visited the Basilica of Pompeii. In February 2019, all 1677 reviews in several languages were downloaded manually [41] and a database containing all of the reviews generated by visitors was created; it has been cross-checked and the few errors found have been eliminated.

In this work, the most representative language of TripAdvisor is Italian (IWR—Italian Written Reviews) due to the geographical position of the sanctuary and, above all, to the historical-cultural and religious importance of Pompeii, followed by the English Written Reviews (EWR). The sample is presented in Table 4, showing the number of reviews per language.

**Table 4.** Sample of 1677 TripAdvisor reviews on Basilica of Pompeii per language.

Language	No. of Reviews
IWR	1298
EWR	212
Other	167
Total	1677

### 3.2. Methodological Notes

In order to understand if the religious tourism could contribute to the sustainable development of Pompeii together with historical-cultural tourism, this work explores the interests of those who visit the Basilica through the analysis of its 1677 reviews. In a second moment of analysis, it focuses only on the reviews of the Basilica that contain references to the Pompeii ruins in order to understand the attraction factors of the Sanctuary for those who also visited the excavations. These two phases of analysis develop the following steps:

- The database has been divided into three groups: IWR, EWR, and other languages. This is to avoid compromising the results, which could be skewed due to the translation process from Italian to English (the IWR represents the 77.4%);
- The analyses of the Italian and English groups have been conducted in the original language while the other languages have been translated in English. This is because, although it could seem to contradict what has just been stated, these reviews are written in 13 different languages (Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Russian, Polish, Dutch, Japanese, Danish, Swedish, Greek, Norwegian, Turkish, and Hungarian) and represent just 12.86% of the reviews. The choice to translate them in English, and not in Italian, is due to the fact that they are written in foreign languages and, for this reason, it is better to analyze them together with the EWR;
- The data processing has been conducted in two different stages: first, the reviews in Italian, and second, the reviews in English (the original and the translated). As regards the EWR, the two databases have been left separate during the elaboration process while the results are shown jointly.

### 3.3. Analysis

To achieve the objective of the work, the following analyses have been carried out:

1. Descriptive analysis;
2. Content analysis.

The descriptive analysis has been conducted for all 1677 reviews of the Basilica of Pompeii with reference to “Year” of reviewing and “Region” or “Country”/“Continent” depending on whether they are IWR or EWR. The analysis is limited to measure frequency and percentage.

The content analysis used in this research consists of frequency and coding analysis. These analyses have been conducted in two steps. First, the IWR have been analyzed and then, separately, the EWR. For the coding analysis, ten codes have been identified on the basis of the words that emerge from the frequency analysis for historical-cultural tourism and 11 for religious tourism. To these, four additional codes have been added, considered generic, and therefore belonging to both categories of tourism. Every code is composed of analysis units, described in Section 4.3.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Preliminary results of the 1677 reviews of Basilica of Pompeii are obtained. In the following sections, the results of the descriptive and content analyses are presented and discussed.

##### 4.1. Descriptive Analysis

Table 5 shows the distribution of the languages of the reviews of the Basilica of Pompeii by year.

**Table 5.** Distribution of the reviews of the Basilica of Pompeii by language and year.

Language	N° of Reviews	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
IWR	1298	10	189	253	330	232	124	99	61
EWR	212	3	42	46	43	38	15	16	9
Other	167	2	23	27	49	34	21	9	2
Total	1677	15	254	326	422	304	160	124	72

Excluding 2019 (the data are updated to February 8th), the cumulative data shows that 2016 is the year with the most reviews (25%), followed by 2017 (19%), and 2015 (18%), for a total of 1052 reviews (63%).

Table 6 presents the distribution of the 1298 IWR on the Basilica of Pompeii by region.

**Table 6.** Distribution of the Italian written reviews (IWR) on the Basilica of Pompeii by region.

Region	Freq.	%	Region	Freq.	%
Campania	334	25.7	Foreign countries	21	1.6
Not available	224	17.3	Liguria	20	1.5
Lazio	144	11.1	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	18	1.4
Lombardy	116	8.9	Sardinia	14	1.1
Puglia	84	6.5	Marche	13	1.0
Emilia Romagna	54	4.2	Umbria	11	0.8
Toscana	52	4.0	Italy	11	0.8
Piemonte	42	3.2	Basilicata	10	0.8
Sicilia	41	3.2	Abruzzo	9	0.7
Calabria	39	3.0	Molise	6	0.5
Veneto	30	2.3	Trentino-Alto Adige	5	0.4

The region with the highest frequency is Campania (26%), followed by Lazio (11%), Lombardy (9%), and Puglia (7%), for a cumulative frequency of 53%.

Considering the geographic position of Pompeii, an overwhelming majority of reviews written by visitors coming from the Campania is to be expected. It is important to point out that, of the 334 reviews from Campania, only 9% (30) were written by people from Pompeii.

These data seem to be conflicting with those presented in Section 2.2; the difference lies in the fact that here are considered only the origins of those who decided to voluntarily review the Basilica. Moreover, 17% of the IWR do not contain information about the geographic origin of the user.

Moving to the analysis of the 379 EWR, the reviews have been analyzed by Continent (Table 7) and Country (Table 8).

**Table 7.** Distribution of the English written reviews (EWR) on the Basilica of Pompeii by continent.

Continent	Freq.	%
Europe	192	50.6
North America	70	18.5
Not Available	44	11.6
South America	37	9.7
Asia	21	5.5
Oceania	12	3.2
Africa	3	0.8

The continent with the highest frequency is Europe (51%), followed by North America (19%), and South America (10%); 12% of the EWR do not contain information about the geographic origin of the user.

**Table 8.** Distribution of the EWR on the Basilica of Pompeii by country.

Country	Freq.	%	Country	Freq.	%
United Kingdom	63	16.6	Costa Rica	2	0.5
USA	57	15.0	Hungary	2	0.5
Not Available	44	11.6	Indonesia	2	0.5
France	28	7.4	Ireland	2	0.5
Brazil	24	5.4	Malta	2	0.5
Spain	20	5.3	Romania	2	0.5
Germany	15	4.0	Serbia	2	0.5
Argentina	12	3.2	Turkey	2	0.5
Italy	12	3.2	Asia	1	0.3
Australia	11	2.9	Barbados	1	0.3
Canada	10	2.6	China	1	0.3
Russia	8	2.1	Europe	1	0.3
Portugal	7	1.8	Finland	1	0.3
Belgium	6	1.6	Greece	1	0.3
Poland	6	1.6	India	1	0.3
Netherlands	5	1.3	Luxembourg	1	0.3
Sweden	5	1.3	Malesia	1	0.3
Switzerland	4	1.1	Mexico	1	0.3
Denmark	3	0.8	New Zealand	1	0.3
Japan	3	0.8	Norway	1	0.3
South Africa	3	0.8	Sri Lanka	1	0.3
Austria	2	0.5	Ukraine	1	0.3

The users who wrote EWR come mainly from the United Kingdom (17%), the USA (15%), France (7%), and Brazil (5%). As regards the country of origin, 12% of the EWR do not contain information about the geographic origin of the user and 3% were written by Italians. These data also differ from those presented in Section 2.2, for the same reasons mentioned above.

#### 4.2. Content Analysis: Frequency

Table 9 shows the frequencies of the first 100 words in the IWR; the words have been translated to facilitate understanding.



**Table 9.** The first 100 words in IWR by frequency.

Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.
sanctuary	1095	cult	122	devotion	75	external	61
Pompeii	622	once/vault <sup>1</sup>	119	we have	73	visited	61
Madonna	454	beauty	118	because	73	Mary	59
location	377	painting	118	to lose	73	breathe	59
visit	322	sight/view <sup>2</sup>	116	wonderful	73	to say	58
to visit	313	just	113	to be	72	experience	58
church	272	Virgin	113	history	72	works	58
very beautiful <sup>3</sup>	242	really	112	atmosphere	71	rich	58
rosary	237	imposing	111	people	71	unique <sup>5</sup>	58
bell tower	235	absolutely	106	certainly	68	mosaics	57
ruins	221	peace	106	stop	67	worthwhile/pain <sup>4</sup>	56
internal	210	world	105	city	66	especially	56
beautiful <sup>5</sup>	186	place	99	deserve	66	museum	55
basilica	181	suggestive	96	part	66	structure	55
very beautiful <sup>5</sup>	172	square	94	center	65	years	54
Always	160	ex-voto	92	majestic	65	to enter	54
to see	159	art	91	year	63	Marian	54
prayer	157	spirituality	86	touching	63	to climb	54
beautiful <sup>3</sup>	147	Longo	85	to do	63	unique	53
faith	144	previously	85	thanks	63	blessed	52
frescoes	143	truly	83	marvelous	62	Saint	51
faithful	142	Bartolo	80	beyond	62	without	51
mass	139	altar	76	worth	62	possible	50
great	135	pilgrims	76	times/vaults <sup>6</sup>	62	Vesuvius	49
suggest	123	to admire	75	emotion	61	life	48

<sup>1</sup> In Italian “volta” (singular) could be used as once (i.e., once in a lifetime) or as an architectural element (vault).

<sup>2</sup> In Italian “vista” could be used as sight or view. <sup>3</sup> Masculine. <sup>4</sup> In Italian “pena” could be used as “pain” or could mean “worth”. <sup>5</sup> Feminine. <sup>6</sup> In Italian “volte” (plural) could be used as times (i.e., I visited it hundred times) or as an architectural element.

For the IWR, the most frequent word is “sanctuary”, repeated 473 times more than the second, “Pompeii.” However, it is important to consider that the first three words are contained in the name of the attraction, “Pontifical Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii.” It is interesting to note that among the first twenty words is “ruins” (221 times).

Table 10 shows the first 100 words in the EWR, that is, the most frequent words in the English reviews, including words from the translation of the other foreign languages.

**Table 10.** The first 100 words in EWR by frequency.

Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.
church	342			area	27	good	20
beautiful	339	town	40	lovely	27	minutes	19
Pompeii	267	impressive	38	out	27	other	19
		main	38	they	27	religious	19
visit	136	outside	37	top	27	station	19
tower	95	view	37	center	26	absolutely	18
place	91	around	35	get	26	before	18
worth	83	really	35	seen	26	decoration	18
inside	76	wonderful	35	some	26	find	18
ruins	76	located	34	ceiling	25	lift	18
sanctuary	73	architecture	33	service	25	shrine	18
see	72	stunning	33	views	25	ancient	17
		visiting	33	Virgin	25	back	17
bell	59	look	32	entrance	24	could	17
people	58	building	31	going	24	frescoes	17
cathedral	55	Italy	31	little	23	marble	17
amazing	48	magnificent	31	site	23	new	17

Table 10. Cont.

Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.
square	48	visited	31	altar	22	old	17
basilica	46	day	30	decorated	22	walking	17
rosary	46	like	30	Madonna	21	during	16
city	44	churches	29	special	21	enjoy	16
mass	44	walk	29	because	20	evening	16
interior	42	beauty	28	ceilings	20	front	16
great	41	miss	28	experience	20	lady	16
must	41	paintings	28	full	20	night	16

For the EWR, the most frequent word is “church”, followed by “beautiful” and “Pompeii”; “sanctuary”, “cathedral”, and “basilica” are present 73, 55, and 46 times, respectively. Here also, the word “ruins” is among the most frequent, in tenth position (in the IWR it is seventeenth).

It is necessary to note that from the first 100 words (Tables 9 and 10), even though these are used to review a religious place, some words emerge that can be attributed exclusively to cultural aspects, such as “bell tower”, “ruins”, “frescoes”, “painting”, “square”, “art”, “altar”, “history”, “mosaics”, “architecture”, “decoration”, “structure”, “museum”, and “marble.”

#### 4.3. Content Analysis: Coding

From the analysis of the frequencies of the most used words to describe the Basilica of Pompeii, (in Section 4.2 only the first 100 were shown, but the analysis covered all of the words) the units of analysis emerge.

It is necessary to observe that, as some words in Italian have two meanings, such as time/vault, sight/view, and worthwhile/pain, those have not been considered. This is due to the fact that it is not possible to understand how many times they have been used with one meaning rather than another. Conversely, words such as “sanctuary”, “cathedral”, “church”, “basilica”, “Madonna”, “Virgin”, and “rosary”, although they may refer to both religious—as an expression of devotion—and cultural aspects—when they are used as a definition (name of the Basilica) or description of a place—the group has decided to consider them as a unit of analysis of religious tourism.

Table 11 shows the codes identified for each type of tourism and the words comprising each code. In particular, ten codes for historical-cultural tourism have emerged, 11 religious, and four general codes.

Table 11. Codes of historical-cultural and religious tourism.

	Codes	English <sup>1</sup> Units	Italian <sup>2</sup> Units
Historical-cultural tourism	Decoration	image, picture, painting, fresco, mosaic, décor, decoration, marble, statue, sculpture, mural, organ	quadro, dipinto, affresco, mosaico, stucco, marmo, marmoreo, statua, scultura, organo
	Bell tower	bell tower, campanile	campanile
	Panorama	panorama, views	panorama
	History	history, historical	storia, storico
	Art	art, artistic	arte, artistico
	Culture	culture, cultural	cultura, culturale
	Architecture	structure, architecture, nave, aisle	struttura, architettonico, architettura, architettonicamente, navata
	Museum	museum	museo, museale
	Square	plaza, square	piazza, piazzale
	Ruins	ruins, excavations	scavi, rovine

Table 11. Cont.

	Codes	English <sup>1</sup> Units	Italian <sup>2</sup> Units
Religious tourism	Believer	Faithfull, pilgrim, devotee, believer	fedele, pellegrino, devoto, credente
	Devotion	faith, devotion	fedele, devozione, devozionale
	Religion	religion, religious	religione, religioso
	Spiritual	spiritual, spiritually, mystic	spirituale, spiritualità, mistico
	Cult	Cult	culto
	Mass	mass, rosary, prayer	messa, rosario, preghiera
	Holy	holy, holiness, sacred, sacredness	sacro, sacralità
	Emotion	emotion, emotional, peace, peaceful, silence, reflection, meditation, love	emozione, emozionante, pace, silenzio, raccoglimento, meditazione, amore
	Church	church, basilica, cathedral, sanctuary	chiesa, basilica, santuario, cattedrale
	Miracle	miracle	miracolo, grazia ricevuta, ex-voto
Madonna	Madonna, Virgin	Madonna, Vergine	
General	Tourist	tourist	turista
	Tourism	tourism, touristic	turismo, turistico
	Historical-cultural tourism	Historical-cultural tourism	turismo culturale
	Religious tourism	Religious tourism	turismo religioso

<sup>1</sup> Every word is to be understood in singular and plural declinations. <sup>2</sup> Every word is to be understood in masculine and feminine, singular and plural declinations.

Table 12 shows the frequency and the density for the codes shown in Table 11, both for the IWR and EWR. The table also shows the rank of the codes based on the frequency. Codes are classified according to the frequency of the IWR codes.

Table 12. Frequency of the codes in the IWR and EWR.

	Codes	Freq. IWR	Freq. EWR	Density % IWR	Density % EWR	Rank IWR	Rank EWR
Historical-cultural tourism	Decoration	547	201	9.52	13.36	1	1
	Bell tower	235	105	4.09	6.98	2	2
	Architecture	226	48	3.93	3.19	3	6
	Ruins	225	93	3.91	6.18	4	3
	Art	157	17	2.73	1.13	5	8
	Square	100	52	1.74	3.46	6	5
	History	88	19	1.53	1.26	7	7
	Museum	58	9	1.01	0.60	8	9
	Panorama	46	75	0.80	4.99	9	4
	Culture	20	1	0.35	0.07	10	10
Religious tourism	Church	1585	552	27.57	36.70	1	1
	Madonna	567	46	9.86	3.06	2	3
	Mass	384	95	6.68	6.32	3	2
	Believer	365	12	6.35	0.80	4	9
	Emotion	352	23	6.13	1.46	5	4
	Devotion	227	15	3.95	1.00	6	6
	Spiritual	137	7	2.38	0.47	7	10
	Cult	123	0	2.14	0.00	8	11
	Miracle	123	13	2.14	0.82	9	8
	Religion	122	22	2.12	1.46	10	5
	Holy	100	14	1.74	0.93	11	7
General	Tourist	44	15	0.77	1.00	1	1
	Tourism	19	0	0.33	0.00	2	2
	Religious tourism	2	0	0.03	0.00	3	2
	Historical-cultural tourism	0	0	0.00	0.00	4	2

As regards the historical-cultural tourism codes, the most frequent are “Decoration” (with a density of 9.52% in IWR and 13.36% in EWR) and “Bell tower” (4.09% in IWR and 6.98% in EWR). From the

third position on, the rank of the codes of the IWR and EWR changes: in the IWR is “Architecture” with a density of 3.93% (6th in EWR – 3.19% density) and in EWR is “Ruins” with a density of 6.18% (4th in IWR – 3.91% density). These results confirm that there is a connection with the ruins that needs to be explored further (see the following step of analysis). Moreover, in the EWR, “Panorama” and “Square” are other frequently occurring codes, with a density of 4.99% and 3.46% respectively.

Moving to the analysis of religious tourism codes, the most frequent codes are “Church”, first for both IWR (27.57%) and EWR (36.70%), “Madonna”, second for the IWR (9.86%) and third for the EWR (3.06%), and “Mass”, third for the IWR (6.68%) and second for the EWR (6.32%).

For the general codes, tourist is the first code for both IWR and EWR, even with a low density (0.77% in the first case, 1% in the second). The codes “Tourism” and “Religious tourism” are repeated 19 and 2 times respectively in the IWR while they are not present in the EWR. “Historical-cultural tourism” is not present anywhere.

In order to understand if there are significant differences, the work has undertaken a further level of analysis. It has been limited to the reviews containing a reference to the ruins: 15% of the IWR (199 out of 1298) refer to the ruins, for a total of 225 citations, whereas 23% (82 out 379) reference the ruins in the case of the EWR. Table 13 presents the frequency and the density for the previous codes, referring exclusively to the reviews that mention the ruins.

**Table 13.** Frequency of the codes in the IWR and EWR of ruins.

	Codes	Freq. IWR	Freq. EWR	Density % IWR	Density % EWR	Rank IWR	Rank EWR
Historical-cultural tourism	Ruins	225	93	17.29	19.38	1	1
	Decoration	84	42	6.46	8.75	2	2
	Bell tower	74	37	5.69	7.71	3	3
	Architecture	36	12	2.77	2.50	4	5
	Square	27	11	2.08	2.29	5	6
	History	17	7	1.31	1.46	6	7
	Panorama	16	23	1.23	4.79	7	4
	Art	15	2	1.15	0.42	8	9
	Museum	8	4	0.61	0.83	9	8
Culture	2	0	0.15	0.00	10	10	
Religious tourism	Church	268	148	20.6	30.83	1	1
	Madonna	103	16	7.92	3.33	2	3
	Mass	94	20	7.23	4.17	3	2
	Believer	71	4	5.45	0.84	4	6
	Devotion	58	2	4.46	0.42	5	9
	Emotion	40	5	3.07	1.04	6	4
	Spiritual	21	3	1.61	0.63	7	7
	Miracle	19	5	1.46	1.04	8	4
	Religion	18	3	1.38	0.63	9	7
	Cult	16	0	1.23	0.00	10	10
Holy	10	0	0.77	0.00	11	10	
General	Tourist	13	6	1.00	1.25	1	1
	Tourism	4	0	0.31	0.00	2	2
	Religious tourism	0	0	0.00	0.00	3	2
	Historical-cultural tourism	0	0	0.00	0.00	3	2

As regards historical-cultural tourism’s codes, not considering that, as one might expect, the first one is “Ruins”, the most frequent are “Decoration” (with a density of 6.46% in IWR and 8.75 in EWR), and “Bell tower” (with a density of 5.69% in IWR and 7.71 in EWR). The fourth code for the IWR is “Architecture” (2.77%—5th in the EWR) and for the EWR, “Panorama” (4.79%—7th in the IWR).

Moving to the analysis of religious tourism’s codes, the results are congruent with those of the overall data. The first three codes by frequency are “Church”, first for both IWR (20.60%) and EWR

(30.83%), “Madonna”, second for the IWR (7.92%) and third for the EWR (3.33%), and “Mass”, third for the IWR (7.23%) and second for the EWR (4.17%).

For the general codes, “Tourist” is present in both the IWR (1%) and the EWR (1.25%), “Tourism” is present only in the IWR (0.31%) while the other two codes are not present anywhere.

## 5. Conclusions

The widespread idea of Pompeii is that of a city with a strong tourist vocation based on important historical and cultural attractions. This is confirmed by the position of Pompeii’s archeological area as the first “Thing-to-Do” on TripAdvisor, with 19,641 reviews (Table 3). Moreover, Pompeii is perceived as a tourist product that can be enjoyed in a day; to reinforce this, there are numerous offers of private operators on TripAdvisor that promote “day trips to Pompeii” among the “Things-to-Do”.

The objective of the work is to understand if it is possible to create a more articulated tourist offer, which can ensure that tourists stay in the city, and make Pompeii tourism more sustainable. The research carried out highlighted the existence of a religious attractor (the Basilica) that could support the tourist offer of Pompeii. In fact, it is the fourth of the “Things-to-Do in Pompeii”, with 1,677 reviews (Table 3), about 12 times less than the reviews of the archeological area. Although the ruins and the Basilica may seem distant for types of tourists and motivation for traveling, important insights emerge from the research.

The first is regarding the trend of reviews of the Basilica, which, in recent years, has seen an increase in the number of reviews, including international ones, highlighting the fact that the Sanctuary has the potential to attract even international tourists. In fact, the descriptive analysis showed that from 2012 onwards the reviews written by foreign tourists increased, from 11 out of 72 (15%) in 2012, to 72 out of 304 (24%) in 2015, up to 65 out of 254 (26%) in 2018 (Table 5).

In addition, the results of the content analysis of the reviews reveal that the visitors of the Basilica are not only motivated by religious belief, but also by the beauty of the sanctuary and its history. From the analysis of the most frequent words in the reviews, a strong artistic and cultural interest emerges towards the architecture of the Basilica, the decorations, and its history both for Italian and foreign visitors. Indeed, among the first 100 (Tables 9 and 10) emerge words such as “bell tower”, “frescoes”, “painting”, “art”, “altar”, “history”, “mosaics”, “architecture”, “decoration”, and “marble.” It is interesting to note that “ruin” is the seventeenth most frequent word in the IWR (221 times) and the tenth among the EWR (76 times). This confirms the presence of a link between historical-cultural and religious tourism in Pompeii.

Finally, to the analysis of the codes and the subsequent analysis of only the reviews that contain the reference to the excavations (Table 13), a shift of the interest of the Basilica’s visitors towards the cultural aspects was expected, but this did not happen. In fact, the results did not differ substantially from those of the overall analysis: both for the first and the second steps of analysis, the more frequent historical-cultural tourism codes (not counting “Ruins”) are “Decoration” and “Bell tower”, followed by “Architecture.” The situation does not change even with the codes referring to religious tourism: “Church”, “Madonna”, and “Mass” are the most frequent codes in both levels of analysis.

At the conclusion of the work, it is possible to give an answer to the first research question: the Basilica of Pompeii, synergistically with the ruins, can contribute to the sustainable development of the city. In fact, the results of the analysis return the image of a tourist that, arriving in Pompeii attracted by the excavations and thus moved by historical-cultural motivations, is able to live moments of spirituality as well as to appreciate the beauty of the Basilica.

In regard to the second research question, the results of the research show that surely also the spiritual and emotional aspects of tourists must be taken into consideration for the development of a sustainable tourist offer. Moreover, it should also be noted that the research suggests other elements that must be considered in addition to archaeological excavations and the Basilica: among the more frequent, the “Panorama” and “Square” codes stand out. This means that both the natural aspects (for example Vesuvius) and those related to entertainment have to be considered and emphasized in

the creation of the tourist offer in Pompeii. All of these elements should be put in a system for the creation of an innovative tourism offer based on experience. The destination Pompeii would no longer be linked to the use of a single cultural asset (excavations), but would become a destination to be lived in all its dimensions: the historical and tangible aspects of the territory and its products and the everyday life of the local population and the suggestions it evokes. This type of tourist offer would create a desire in the tourist to stay overnight in the city, contributing to the local development and sustainable tourism of Pompeii.

At the end of the paper it is important to underline that, in the field of tourism development, scholars have been very interested in overtourism, a term that recalls all the problems linked to the negative impact of excessive tourism on the host communities and/or on the environment (tourism disturbances) [42,43]. It must be emphasized that the city of Pompeii lives with the many tourists who visit the archaeological park for years. Even if it is a daily tourism, the infrastructure, transportation, and services of the city are able to sustain the tourist flow without creating problems for the local population. Furthermore, the creation of an experiential tourist offers based mainly on historical, cultural, and religious attractors, proposed in this paper, is not intended to increase the number of tourists, but simply to keep them in the city for a longer period of time.

### *5.1. Practical Implication*

The valorization of the experiential dimension of Pompeian tourism, aimed at the self and cultural enrichment of tourists, should bring the players of the territory's governance to work toward the creation of a deep relationship between visitor and territory. The tourist should be able to associate Pompeii with a journey of a fascinating search of their origins (with the visit to the ruins), of himself (thanks to the emotional/spiritual involvement linked to the Sanctuary), and of a deep contact with nature (Paths and trails of the Vesuvius National Park).

### *5.2. Limitations and Future Research*

The research focuses only on TripAdvisor's reviews written by users who decide to voluntarily review the Basilica and does not represent all of the tourists that visit Pompeii. Rather, it only reflects the opinions of a type of tourists: those who are confident with technology and are inclined to leave their comments on the web.

Moreover, this work gives only the results of an initial step of analysis and does not consider all of the tourist offers of Pompeii but is limited to the analysis of the reviews of the Basilica. The group wishes a further study aimed at analyzing the reviews of the ruins of Pompeii, first in their entirety and then focusing only on those that contain a reference to the Basilica. In addition, the group hopes to expand the analysis through the insertion of the quantitative type variables available in TripAdvisor, which could help to analyze the reviews of the users in relation to the numerical valuations given to attractions, especially for the negative valuations.

Considering that the jurisprudence of Italy has shown interest in TripAdvisor with reference to false reviews, for example, the accommodation facilities, it is natural to ask how a city that invests resources in destination management and territorial marketing can protect their sought positioning and verify if the platform constitutes an appropriate means of doing unfair business practices, with all the consequences that derive from this in terms of responsibility and sanctions, without neglecting the profiles of fair competition within the market [44]. This led us to consider an additional future field of study: the analysis of the profiles of the tourist/destination, investigating both the system regulations on tourist/destination protection applicable to the field of reviews and the unexplored possibilities of protecting the tourist/destination through them.

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