

Article

Martial Arts Tourism: Meta-Analysis of Publications from 2005–2020

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Abstract: A feature of modern society in the era of cultural globalization is its mobility. One of the manifestations of this social mobility is people spending free time on tourist trips. Tourism, as understood as a sociocultural phenomenon, is a special manifestation of location. In addition to the motives for undertaking trips in martial arts tourism, individual destinations, specific tourism potential and the typology of participants in tourist meetings were analyzed, and individual cases were examined. The research materials were 44 articles published in scientific journals indexed in *Scopus*, *Web of Science*, and *EBSCOHost* databases. Publications, which appeared in the sources discussed between 2005 and mid-2020s were considered. Some periodicals were present in all three of the quoted databases, therefore specific articles were taken into account only once. This study will cover a meta-analysis of martial arts tourism in journals indexed in several major scientific databases. It is related to the phenomenon of tourism of this type, which is discussed from various scientific perspectives. As a research tool, the Atlas.ti program was used (mainly in the qualitative research or analysis of qualitative data), by means of which correlations and dominant items were sought. A comparison with other publications suggests that no similar meta-analysis has so far been performed in relation to the literature devoted to the subject of “martial arts tourism”. Particularly interesting conclusions were identified: (1) there are thematic relations between the destination country, the main destination, and the destination country; (2) martial arts are treated by researchers as both primary, and secondary threads, (3) the difference between travel destinations and types events attended by people interested in martial arts, (4) the variety of event formats plays a role in popularizing the subject of these forms of physical activity, and (5) the number of publications describing specific destinations is not particularly related to specific countries as destinations.

Keywords: fighting arts; tourism; destination; academic journals; bibliometrics; scientific databases

1. Introduction

A feature of modern society in the era of cultural globalization is its mobility. One of the manifestations of this social mobility is people spending free time on tourist trips. Tourism, as understood as a sociocultural phenomenon, is a special manifestation of location, which is: “a set of complementary processes of merging, and separating, introducing something into the global space, and reserving for a given area. These are inseparable pressures of what is a ‘local’ with what brings the current of globalization (...) It consists in introducing local attractions to the global tourist market, with some of the benefits returning to the local cultural space, for example by promoting the place, and tourism investments” [1].

This study will cover a meta-analysis of martial arts tourism in academic journals indexed in several major scientific databases. It is related to the phenomenon of tourism of this type, which is discussed from various scientific perspectives.

The following research questions were posed:

1. Which content presented in the studied scientific journals was related to the subject of martial arts and combat sports tourism? Was there a correlation between specific martial arts and combat sports and the selected subject categories?
2. Which martial arts and combat sports were described in the studied scientific publications?
3. What types of events were described in the articles?
4. What types of events related to martial arts and combat sports tourism are presented in the studied scientific journals?
5. Is there a correlation between the types of events and specific martial arts and combat sports?
6. Which destinations were the most frequently repeated in publications?

The research method used was a qualitative analysis of the content of the literature on the basis of which the subject scope of the publications was categorized. As a research tool, the Atlas.ti program was used (mainly used in qualitative research or analysis of qualitative data), by which correlations and dominant items were sought. In addition, this program was used to prepare the research material for interpretation.

2. Literature Review on the Subject

The field of martial arts tourism views tourism in the broad sense without being limited to trips motivated by entertainment and pleasure. Noteworthy are the more ambitious forms of tourism, in which tourists are motivated by higher-order needs—self-realization, personal or professional education, aesthetic pleasure, and cognitive stimulation. This is implemented, among others, in various forms of cultural tourism.

Buczowska and von Rohrscheidt's monograph [2] describes 18 forms of cultural tourism, which is probably does not provide an exhaustive review of the issue. In the broad sense of cultural tourism, it includes: museum tourism; cultural heritage; event tourism; study trips; religious and pilgrimage tourism; ethnic-, industrial-, literary- and film tourism; thanatourism (travel to places of tragedy and death); historical and military tourism; culinary; enotourism (wine tourism); ecotourism; thematic journeys along route; paranormal tourism; martial arts tourism; and cultural tourism in urban space [2]. Among the various forms of cultural tourism, we find martial arts tourism. These trips are motivated by practicing, studying, teaching or promoting martial arts [3]. Martial arts tourists travel therefore for the acquisition of new knowledge from a long-distance culture system outside of their permanent residence [1]. Alternatively, martial arts tourists travel to these destinations receive special cultural content in their arts' unique context. Scientists studying martial arts also travel and participates in the exchange of knowledge in this area.

The theoretical perspective for scientific reflection on martial arts tourism is most often cultural anthropology on the basis of which a given case, tourist event, series of events, tourist activities, or the whole sociocultural phenomenon is analyzed. It can be, for example, an analysis of this type of tourism as a form of nonentertainment tourism; i.e., cultivated for educational, ethos, and self-creation purposes [4,5].

So far, the only monograph devoted to martial arts offers a methodology for researching this phenomenon of martial arts tourism. We find in it a historical presentation of the Japanese *mushashugyo* tradition: a journey for learning martial arts. In it is a proposed typology that takes into account the geographical dimension (destinations and special places), descriptions of specific cases, a qualitative comparison with sports tourism, and links with scientific tourism [6]. Other authors consider the issue from the point of view of the system theory of tourism and its structural arrangement; they also emphasize the humanistic dimension of the tourism phenomenon [3,6,7]. Information and education

are at the center of the attractiveness of various forms of cultural tourism, which is indicated in particular by humanist-oriented researchers and theorists [8–10].

Other approaches by Tuan that co-create the scientific framework are the anthropology of space and the concept of place as a space transformed in the center of fixed values. Special places are somewhat sacred, and this also applies to special places in martial arts. These include exercise places (called *dōjō* in Japanese), tombs and monuments of great teachers and masters, and other special places of historical or symbolic value [11–13].

The global popularity of martial arts, their multiformity, and their presence in tourism in their countries of origin as a source of cultural heritage and attraction, and their usage to promote the brand of a given country (for example, China, Japan, Korea, and Thailand) require that martial arts tourism should also be explored from the new perspective of the paradigmatic theory of martial arts. Since the new paradigm requires that the subject of research be considered systemically and the human being as a whole, the Humanistic Theory of Martial Arts or the General Theory of Fighting Arts seems optimal [3,6]. The new paradigm of science must be humanistic, cultural, systemic, and holistic [14–17].

We understand man as a whole as a psychophysical being with the needs of both their physical and spiritual nature. We here define traditional martial arts as: “a historic category of flawless methods of unarmed combat fights, and use of weapons combined with a spiritual element” [18]. In turn, ‘martial (path) way’ is here defined as: particular forms of physical or psychophysical culture based on the traditions of warrior culture (→*cultura militum*), which lead through the training of fighting techniques to psycho-improvement and self-realization. These are simultaneous processes of education and positive asceticism. In other words: “the ‘way of martial arts’ is a psychophysical process of improvement, and of understanding the complex systems of values, knowledge, and skills” [18]. The ways of martial arts are described in different terms: Japanese *budō*, Chinese *wushu*, Korean *mudo*, and they are treated by experts as educational systems and paths of psychophysical and personal improvement [19,20].

In May 2003, in Biała Podlaska (Poland), the Scientific, and Methodical Tourism, and Religion Conference took place, at which Cynarski presented a paper based on his several-week stay in Japan three years earlier [21]. It was the first publication in Polish about a trip for martial arts studies using the conceptual categories of ‘para-pilgrimage tourism’ and ‘travel to the sources of martial arts’, although reports, and reflections from that stay and other similar trips had appeared previously [22]. The para-religiosity and resemblance to a pilgrimage are due to the presence of the spiritual dimension, the genetic connections with Far Eastern religions, the great respect, and even honor, which are given to historical monuments associated (in this case) with samurai traditions and Japanese martial arts [21,22].

Several years have passed since the announcement of the concept of the theoretical approach to the phenomenon of martial arts tourism to its monographic elaboration [22–24]. At that time, 1) special events and important destinations were analyzed, 2) maps of martial arts geography were created, 3) the motives and goals of participants in tourist events were analyzed, and 4) issues related to this topic were presented at conferences and published in various scientific studies.

There has, to a limited extent, been scientific institutionalization of the research in the form of the establishment of a special Tourism Commission at the Idokan Poland Association (IPA) and a separate thematic section in the journal *Ido Movement for Culture: Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology* for martial arts tourism. A special issue of *Sustainability* is devoted to this topic, and perhaps the effect of international collaboration by researchers will be a multi-author monograph that collects the works from this issue.

Analysis in the field of research methodology in martial arts tourism or detailed typology have rarely been made. Suggestions for the use of qualitative research, such as participant observation or observatory participation, as well as analysis of photographic records from the point of view of visual sociology dominate the subject [13,25]: “The source materials for martial arts tourism research are, among others, autobiographies, and biographies of martial arts masters (...), and reports from stays on foreign martial arts internships, trips to competitions, and others” [3]. They may also include

photos, tourist notes, and other “personal documents” according to the methodology proposed by Znaniecki [13,26,27].

Martial arts tourism is divided, among other categories, into trips according to their direction and according to the main purpose. Examples of travel destinations are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of travel destinations in martial arts tourism.

Direction	Country	Purpose of the Trip
From Europe to East Asia	China	Shaolin kung-fu [28–30], Chenjiago, and Chen taijiquan [31–33], Nan-quan, south styles [34,35]
	Indonesia	Pencak silat [36,37]
	Japan	Budo, different disciplines [13,21,38]
	North Korea	Taekwon-do (International Taekwon-do Federation, ITF) [27,39]
	South Korea	Taekwondo (World Taekwondo, WT) [40]
	Thailand	Muai Thai [13,41]
To and from North America and Europe	Brazil	Capoeira [42]
	Russia	Sambo [13,43]
	Germany	Munich, school of meijin L. Sieber, 10 dan [44–46], Hockenheim, European WingTsun Organisation (EWTO) seminars [47,48], Aurach, modern jujutsu [49,50], Billerbeck, Congress of International Martial Arts Federation (IMAF) [22]
		Austria
	France	e.g., aikibudo, and <i>kobudo</i> [13,23]
	Poland	Rzeszow, e.g., International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society (IMACSSS) Congresses [53–55]

Source: Own research.

The types of trips (subforms of martial arts tourism) result from different purposes and motivation on the part of tourists. These can be trips for teaching and promoting, for new knowledge and confirmation of competence (higher master’s degrees), strictly sports trips (competitions, training), trips to support athletes/team, trips to learn about other related exercise systems, participation in meetings of historical reconstructions (all of which concern trips), and stays directly related to studying martial arts [3]. Alternatively, they can be trips to special places (such as the Shaolin Monastery), field studies or conferences devoted to martial arts research: i.e., when tourism is indirectly associated with the practice of martial arts.

Of course, tourists can be motivated by the goal of integration, as it concerns the community of enthusiasts—a kind of new tribe. For example, *capoeira* is associated with a specific enculturation and adopted lifestyle for the people who practice it [1,42,56]. In addition to the motives for undertaking trips in martial arts tourism, individual destinations, the specific tourist potential, the typology of participants in tourist meetings, and individual cases are examined [3,13,57]. We also note economic differences to attendance in that some organizations conduct seminars on teaching martial arts commercially in high-standard facilities, while others are held in fairly ascetic conditions with participants living on campsites and exercising in fields. The offer is adapted to the participants’ financial capabilities.

In addition to published papers, chapters in collective works such as scientific monographs, as cited above, and numerous texts, have also been published in scientific periodicals, especially those devoted to the study of martial arts and combat sports. However, there are also articles in tourist academic journals devoted to tourism, recreation, and traditional sports [39,58–60], though this is rare. This topic has never appeared in some tourism magazines.

In 2007, Sieber, Cynarski, and Litwiniuk announced ‘the existence of martial arts tourism’, i.e., its appearance in scientific reflection. They did it in the pages of *Ido Movement for Culture*, which, at that time [24] was originally published mainly in Polish [61] with a relatively small impact on a world scale. Contributions to the scientific interpretation of the phenomenon of martial arts were already being published here, along with descriptions of events relevant to the latest history of martial arts as well as the process of the institutionalization that was taking place in martial arts organizations in

Europe [44,62]. Since 2011, it has been a quarterly publication published entirely in English under a new name *Ido Movement for Culture: Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology* and is gaining recognition among scientific communities and organizations of specialists from the various martial arts [61,63–65]. Scientific texts on martial arts tourism are regularly published in a permanent thematic section in that journal. There are also works resulting from field research, i.e., trips for the scientific interpretation of cultural traditions related to martial arts that apply in- and outside of East Asia [31,46,66,67].

Another journal, recommended by the International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society, is the Spanish *Revista de Artes Marciales Asiáticas (Journal of Asian Martial Arts)*. In addition to one article devoted to martial arts tourism, a series of reports on scientific events related to the functioning of the martial arts environment have been published in it, which for the analysis of the phenomenon of martial arts tourism may constitute valuable factual source material [43,63,68,69]. Methodological-training seminars and scientific conferences devoted to the fighting arts (combat sports and martial arts) are the goal of trips for both enthusiasts and professional researchers, thus co-creating martial arts tourism. Related thematic issues are also published in the journal *Archives of Budo*.

The thematic profile of the periodicals listed here is mainly focused on physical culture and cultural research, which is best-suited to martial arts tourism research. This is strengthened by “martial arts” being included in the names of both these scientific journals. For many other journals, authors have the difficult task of preparing something interesting from an economic or psycho- sociological perspective. This tends to be the dominant narrative in magazines devoted to tourism. Therefore, individual articles are scattered through periodicals devoted to cultural studies of East and Southeast Asia [32,40,59], research into the history of sport [28], or more generally in the physical culture sciences [48,70], and social sciences [35]. An economic periodical is essentially interested in the economic dimensions of martial arts, and its impact on the efficiency of the tourism industry [36].

Despite numerous contributions, only some of the works bring new insights, particularly in the field of research methodology. It seems interesting to view a tourist event from three different points of view: the organizer, a guest, and an external analyst, as has been undertaken in work by Cynarski, Sieber, and Mytskan [45]. It is possible that this approach best meets the methodological standard of the “humanistic factor” in this type of sociocultural research [26].

3. Materials and Methods

The research materials were 44 articles published in scientific journals indexed on the *Scopus*, *Web of Science*, and *EBSCOHost* databases. The articles were published in the discussed sources between 2005 and mid-2020s (up to the start of this research) and searched for using phrases such as “martial arts tourism”, “combat sports tourism”, “martial arts leisure”, and “combat sports leisure”. Some periodicals (presented in Table 2) were present in all three of the quoted databases. Specific articles were therefore only considered once.

Specific thematic categories were examined, such as: (1) destination country, (2) direction of travel, (3) destination name, (4) type of martial art, (5) main purpose of the trip, (6) type of event (e.g., gala, tournament, conference, training seminar, master exams, sports camp, and/or study trip), and (7) number of participants. Their presence testified to the characteristics of a specific thematic profile in the publications identified (in this case, research on martial arts tourism). The majority of the authors were from Poland and writing predominately about Japanese martial arts. It should also be noted here that all translations of the publication in languages other than English were made by the authors and proofread by native English speakers.

Table 2. List of periodicals reviewed (2005–mid-2020s).

Journals with the Percentages of Content Published $\leq 1\%$	
Managing Sports and Leisure	Journal of Sports Tourism
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights	Ekoloji Dergisi
Physical Activity Review	Asia Life Sciences
Revista de Artes Marciales Asiaticas	International Journal of the History of Sport
Poetics	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research
International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research	Rozprawy Naukowe Akademii Wychowania
Information, Communication and Education Application	Fizycznego we Wrocławiu
International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research	Journal of Computational and Theoretical Nanoscience
	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health
Journals with the Percentages of Content Published $>1\%$	
Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology (17.8%)	

Source: Own research.

4. Results

4.1. Thematic Relationships

The present study's first research questions ('Which content presented in the studied scientific journals was related to the subject of martial arts and combat sports tourism?' and 'Was there a correlation between specific martial arts and combat sports and the selected subject categories?'), concerned the characteristics of content depicting the theme of tourism for martial arts and combat sports. A zero-hypothesis was made for the statistical analysis: There is a correlation between specific martial arts and combat sports and the selected subject categories. It was assumed that their wording was indicated by categories relating to (1) health, (2) consumption, (3) science, (4) culture, (5) training/cultivation, and 6) other. The results obtained are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Content presenting martial arts and combat sports tourism.

Thematic Categories	Martial Arts	Combat Sports
Health	4	1
Consumption	2	1
Science	7	4
Culture	8	3
Training/Cultivation	6	2
Other	3	3
Total	30	14

Source: Own research.

The obtained results ($\alpha = 0.05$, $p = 0.899$, and Chi-Square = 1.620) permitted the rejection of the zero hypothesis, which means there was no correlation between specific martial arts and combat sports and the selected subject categories.

4.2. Martial Arts That Appeared in the Analyzed Publications

The second research question ('Which martial arts and combat sports were described as a main in the studied scientific publications?') referred to martial arts in particular, and those martial arts that appeared in the analyzed publications. It was assumed that their wording was indicated by categories relating to (1) martial arts and (2) combat sports. The results obtained are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Types of martial arts and combat sports studied.

Martial Arts	Combat Sports
Kalaripayatt	
Capoeira	
Wushu	
Taekwondo	
Pencak silat	Sambo
Shaolin kung-fu	
Karate	
Jujitsu	
Signum Polonicum	

Source: Own research.

Based on the information contained in Table 4, it can be concluded that more martial arts than combat sports appeared as the main topics of articles. Based on the information contained in Table 4, it can be concluded that more martial arts than combat sports appeared as the main topics of articles. It can therefore be assumed that there was almost no interest in combat sports tourism, based on specific examples, among authors publishing in the studied journals.

4.3. Depicting Types of Events

In the third research question (What types of events were described in articles?), which concerned the types of events indicated in the researched publications, it was assumed that two categories were related to them: their type and the main purpose of the trip. The results of their analysis are presented in Figure 1.

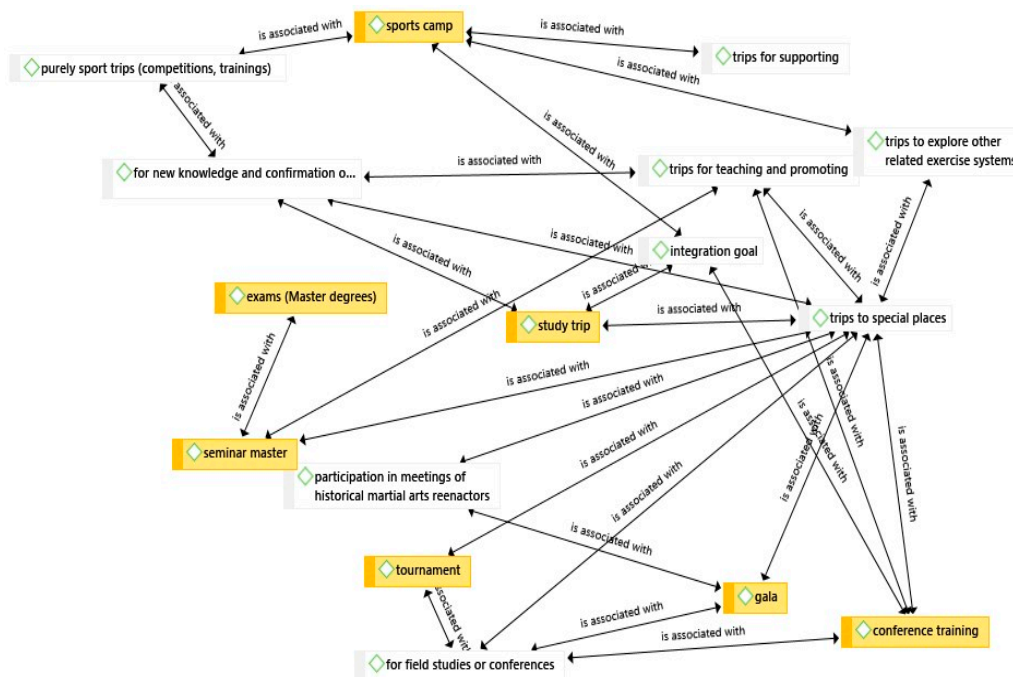


Figure 1. Types of events as the main purpose of martial arts tourism trips. Source: Own research.

The results of Figure 1 indicate variation in the relationship between the types of events and the travel goals of participants in different events. Participants took part in various events. There was also diversity between them in terms of the purpose of the trip, according to which they were travelling to participate in scientific, recreational, sports, educational, and other gatherings. Their activities involved, among other things, in martial arts training, taking martial art rank exams, visiting places

and facilities related to martial arts, and participating in combat sports and conferences, and other general tourist activities.

4.4. Content Presenting Types of Events

In the case of the fourth and fifth research questions (‘What types of events related to martial arts and combat sports tourism are presented in the studied scientific journals?’ and ‘Is there is a correlation between the types of events and specific martial arts and combat sports?’), which were related to determining which types of events were presented as particularly popular, it was found appropriate to use the categories *event type* and *the number of participants*. The results obtained are presented in Figure 2.

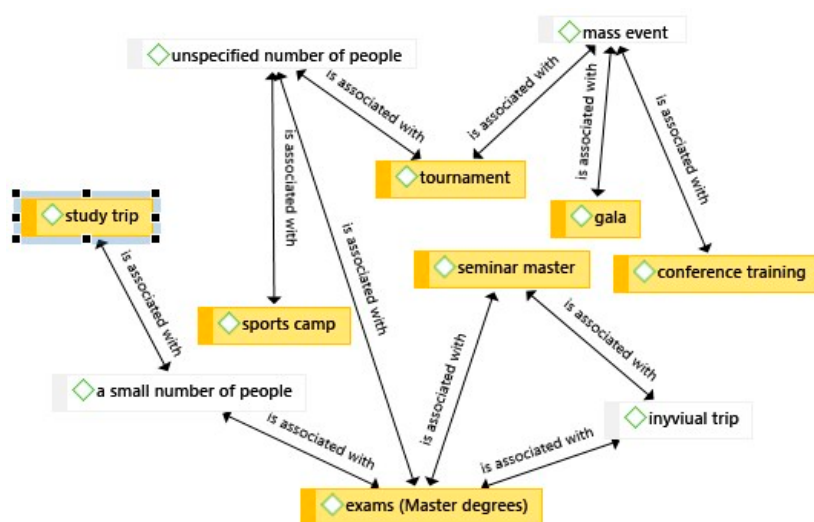


Figure 2. Content presenting types of events and their participants. Source: Own research.

The information shown in Figure 2 shows the popularity of some events related to martial arts, and combat sports. In addition, the presented dependencies also indicate the diversity of the occurrence of any gathering of people interested in these topics. Therefore, training, galas, seminars, and others can be treated as events of various formats, and with an unspecified number of participants (in scientific publications).

A zero hypothesis was made for the statistical analysis: There is a correlation between the types of events and specific martial arts, and combat sports. It was assumed that their wording was indicated by categories relating to (1) health, (2) consumption, (3) science, (4) culture, (5) training/cultivation, and (6) other. The results obtained are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Numbers of martial arts and combat sports and aims studied.

Thematic Categories	Martial Arts	Combat Sports
Study trip	7	1
Sports camp	2	2
Gala	2	2
Tournament	6	4
Seminar master	2	0
Conference training	4	2
Exams (Master’s degrees)	2	1
Other	3	2
Total	30	14

Source: Own research.

The obtained results ($\alpha = 0.05$, $p = 0.796$, and Chi-Square = 3.863) permitted the rejection of the zero hypothesis, which means there is no correlation between the types of events and specific martial arts and combat sports.

4.5. The Most Frequently Recurring Destinations

The answer to question 6 (Which destinations were the most frequently repeated in publications?) is presented in Figure 3 and contains relevant percentage indicators.

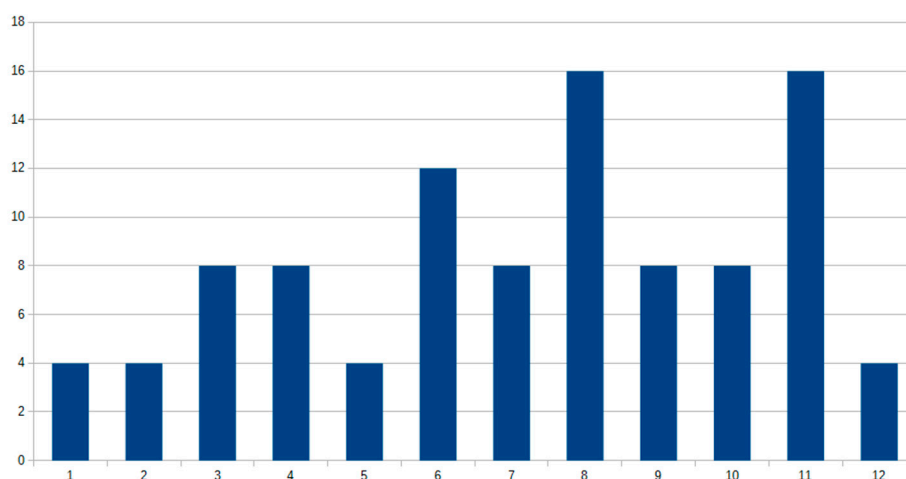


Figure 3. Indications of the most frequently repeated destinations (in %). Source: Own research. 1: Serbia, 2: Russia, 3: Brazil, 4: North Korea, 5: South Korea, 6: China, 7: Czech Republic, 8: Japan, 9: Germany, 10: Portugal, 11: Poland, 12: Italy.

The results obtained indicate the greater presence of Japan and Poland (16% each) as martial arts tourism destinations than other countries. In fact, there were four times fewer articles about martial arts tourism in Serbia, Russia, South Korea, and Italy (4% each).

In the case of Japan and Poland, these destinations were related among others to martial arts centers, academic centers, and scientific associations. However, martial arts tourism activities to countries with the lowest percentage (e.g., Serbia, Russia, South Korea, and Italy) involved sports and scientific events.

5. Discussion

A comparison with other publications suggests that no similar meta-analysis has so far been performed in relation to martial arts tourism literature. In his monograph, Cynarski discusses the state of the literature on the subject, but he does so separately considering methodological and geographical issues, research by destination, and special places, comparison to the wider sport tourism, tourism on the border between martial arts, and science [13]. Elsewhere, the specific architecture and interior design matters were also addressed [12,60,71].

Virtually every article contained references to the literature on the subject of martial arts and cited the state of knowledge in similar fields. It might be due to the intersection of studies on martial arts, and cultural tourism, or a problematic, historical article [28,37,39,66], or just a small case study. Sometimes the issue appears only once in one publication. An example here may be the relationship between the cultural tradition of a given martial arts and music [37]. In turn, reports from scientific events and festivals constitute only a small number of contributions to the state of knowledge, which is evident even in the results of the answer to the fifth question.

The current study provides several new insights into the emerging field of martial arts tourism. This is a collective analysis with a numerical approach to obtain relatively hard data on martial arts tourism based on major scientific publications. We managed to obtain information on statistically

significant dependencies, for which in most available publications we found only intellectual reflections and attempts at intuitive assessments.

The rapid development of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software has contributed to reducing the burden of importing, sorting, grouping, and coding data (including those related to “martial arts tourism”). The use of the Atlas.ti program also allows the analysis of other trends in tourism [72]. Novelty of the present research is the presentation of the mixed qualitative and quantitative analysis related to martial arts tourism as reported in journals indexed in the most important scientific databases.

The limitations of this study are: (1) a relatively small number of publications resulting from this niche form of tourism, (2) lack of accurate data, especially on the number of participants in the described tourist events, and (3) multilateral dependencies of individual categories that impede explicit model inference.

6. Conclusions

Considering the results of the research, five particularly interesting conclusions were identified. First, in the case of martial arts tourism, there are thematic relationships between destination countries, main destinations, and destination countries. Second, various martial arts and only one combat sport (*sambo*) are treated by researchers in the publications. Third, there is a difference seen between the travel destinations and types of events to which people interested in martial arts and combat sports participate. Fourth, the diversity of event formats plays a role in popularizing the subject of these forms of physical activity. Fifth, the number of publications describing specific destinations is not particularly associated with specific countries as destinations. It can be assumed that the deepening of knowledge in subsequent studies should concern, among other topics, extending the list of research facilities by including other types of mass media (e.g., web pages of martial arts schools). Another area of study that would further enhance the field of martial arts studies would be to analyze the impact of martial arts tourism publications on recipients.

This analysis can be used in further research in this area, especially with regard to economic and social considerations. However, the economic dimension should be developed taking into account the scale and intensity of the phenomenon of martial arts tourism.

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