



Semarak International Journal of Future Tourism and Hospitality Management

Journal homepage:
<https://semarakilmu.my/index.php/sijfthm/index>
ISSN: 3083-9742



Faith forward, Sacred Horizons: Charting the Future of Christian Tourism through Apostle Paul's Journey

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 17 August 2025

Received in revised form 29 September 2025

Accepted 3 October 2025

Available online 6 October 2025

Keywords:

Christian pilgrimage; Apostle Paul's Journeys; commercialisation; spiritual tourism and sustainable futures

ABSTRACT

Christian spiritual tourism is one of the rapidly growing segments of global religious travel, where faith, heritage and commerce often intertwine. This research examines how Christian pilgrimage has transformed over time, with focus on Paul's missionary journey. Once a pure act of devotion has slowly shifted into an organised and even commercialised enterprise. The research primarily examines the role of heritage industries, local economies, and tourism networks surrounding biblical sites in Turkey, Greece, Malta, Italy, and Cyprus. Methodologically, Paul's journey serves as both a historical and spiritual map to trace this shift. An archival study of biblical and historical texts grounds the study in the original significance of Paul in these sites, while interviews with pilgrims, tour operators, and local people, along with observations and some economic analysis, reveal the present-day reality. Case studies also bring out the tension between spiritual growth, cultural truth and market needs. Looking forward, the research interprets these patterns to identify emerging opportunities in Christian tourism, such as sustainable pilgrimage paths, digital faith experiences, and intercultural exchange through heritage travel. With reference to Paul's routes across past devotion, present commerce, and future possibilities, the study underscores both the challenges and hope in charting a balance between faith, authenticity and economy.

1. Introduction

Spiritual tourism has gained prominence in recent decades as individuals seek deeper, transformative experiences that connect them to their religious roots. Among Christian believers, pilgrimage journeys offer a chance to walk in the footsteps of Biblical figures, experience sacred places, and strengthen faith. One of the most compelling figures for such journeys is Apostle Paul, whose missionary routes spanned key regions of the Roman Empire.

As interest in faith-based tourism grows, so does the need to analyze its commercial dimensions. Tour operators, religious institutions, and hospitality providers are increasingly involved in organizing

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<https://doi.org/10.37934/sijfthm.3.1.3648>

and monetizing these journeys. This paper explores how the commercialization of Christian spiritual tourism, particularly along Paul's routes, has impacted the experience of pilgrimage.

1.1 Conceptual Framework: (Spiritual Tourism and Commercialization)

Spiritual tourism refers to travel motivated by faith, self-discovery, and religious practices. Unlike leisure tourism, spiritual tourism has an intrinsic motivation rooted in beliefs and moral values. Pilgrimage is a core component of this form of tourism.

Commercialization refers to the transformation of religious experiences into marketable and monetized services. This includes structured tour packages, ticketed access to holy sites, merchandise sales, and guided itineraries. While commercialization can provide better infrastructure and wider access, it also raises questions about the sanctity and authenticity of the spiritual experience.

1.2 Apostle Paul's Missionary Routes as Pilgrimage Paths

Apostle Paul undertook several missionary journeys, spreading Christianity across Asia Minor and Europe. Figure 1 shows all the four journeys undertaken by him. Today, these journeys are retraced through organized pilgrimages:

- i. First Journey: Cyprus, Antioch (Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra, Derbe (modern-day Turkey)
- ii. Second Journey: Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth (Greece)
- iii. Third Journey: Ephesus (Turkey), Macedonia, and again to Corinth
- iv. Journey to Rome: Paul's final journey included his arrest, trial, and travel to Rome

These routes have become spiritual corridors, drawing Christians from various denominations. Tours often include scripture readings, devotional sessions, and historical narrations, reinforcing the spiritual value.

1.3 Commercial Infrastructure and Stakeholders

The commercialization of Paul-based pilgrimages involves several stakeholders:

- i. Travel Agencies and Tour Operators: Specialize in faith-based itineraries like "In the Footsteps of Paul."
- ii. Churches and Ministries: Partner with tour providers or organize pilgrimages for congregations.
- iii. Hospitality Sector: Hotels near pilgrimage sites offer themed stays, prayer rooms, and religious programming.
- iv. Local Governments and Heritage Bodies: Manage and preserve biblical sites, sometimes charging entrance fees.

Tour packages often include accommodation, meals, transport, entry fees, local guides, and spiritual facilitators. Themed souvenirs such as Bibles, rosaries, and holy oils also generate revenue.



Fig. 1. Map showing the 4 missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul

1.4 Case Studies: Popular Routes and Destinations

- i. Ephesus, Turkey: Once a thriving Roman city, now an archaeological site, it hosted Paul's teachings for over two years. The nearby Basilica of St. John attracts thousands of pilgrims annually.
- ii. Philippi, Greece: Site of the first Christian church in Europe, with well-preserved ruins and a baptismal stream traditionally associated with Lydia.
- iii. Rome, Italy: The Vatican, Mamertine Prison, and the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls are major pilgrimage centers.

These sites have evolved into tourism ecosystems with museums, restaurants, cultural shows, and religious merchandise.

1.5 Economic Impact and Benefits

Christian spiritual tourism contributes significantly to local and national economies:

- i. Employment generation for local guides, artisans, and service providers
- ii. Revenue from entry tickets, donations, and taxes
- iii. Preservation funding for ancient sites
- iv. Promotion of local culture and crafts

According to the UNWTO, religious tourism accounts for 300 to 330 million tourists annually, many of whom are Christian pilgrims. The Apostle Paul routes have emerged as a high-potential niche.

1.6 Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Despite economic gains, several concerns emerge:

- i. Over-commercialization: Risk of diluting spiritual essence with profit motives
- ii. Cultural Misrepresentation: Inaccurate or dramatized narratives to please tourists
- iii. Environmental Impact: Increased footfall may damage fragile archaeological remains

- iv. **Spiritual Authenticity:** Commodification of sacred experiences may reduce personal reflection

It is essential to maintain a balance between commercialization and the spiritual purpose of such journeys.

1.7 Best Practices and Sustainable Models

To preserve the sanctity of spiritual tourism:

- i. **Community-based tourism:** Engage local communities as custodians of heritage
- ii. **Authentic storytelling:** Guided tours by theologians and historians
- iii. **Eco-tourism integration:** Promote sustainable travel practices
- iv. **Interfaith collaboration:** Encourage shared heritage exploration without exclusivity

Tour providers like "Pilgrim Tours" and "Maranatha Tours" are known for integrating scriptural study, prayer, and community engagement into their packages.

1.8 Future Prospects

With growing interest in experiential and purpose-driven travel, Christian spiritual tourism is poised for expansion. Technology such as virtual tours, AR/VR pilgrimage apps, and digital storytelling may complement physical journeys. There is also scope for academic and theological institutions to collaborate in designing spiritually rich, historically accurate tours.

1.9 Conclusion

Christian spiritual tourism, especially when centered on Apostle Paul's missionary routes, exemplifies the blend of sacred devotion and commercial enterprise. While monetization can enhance access and experience, it must be ethically managed to preserve the spiritual core. Stakeholders must prioritize authenticity, community involvement, and sustainability to ensure that these journeys remain sacred pathways rather than mere tourist trails.

2. Review Of Previous Studies

The Story of Paul's Journey Sites as Anchors in Pilgrimage. Pilgrims often seek physical anchors for their spiritual narratives. Walking through Ephesus or Corinth becomes more than a history lesson—it is an act of emotional grounding, a waypoint in their ongoing spiritual journey. As one pilgrim steps on the marble streets where Paul once preached, the geography itself becomes theology, reshaping the internal landscape of faith.

Scholars have long reflected on this intertwining of place, memory, and meaning. Reader [5] describes biblical sites as "cultural capital", where prestige and accessibility dictate their dominance. Thus, Rome and Athens appear not only as biblical milestones but also as cultural and logistical hubs, elevated in tour packages for their dual allure.

The commercial dimension is equally present. Timothy *et al.*, [9] note that tour operators deliberately foreground sites like Ephesus and Rome, knowing these resonate deeply while remaining logistically practical. In this way, devotion is paired with feasibility, and commerce amplifies faith.

Yet not all sacred sites are equally visible. Collins-Kreiner [2], analyzing pilgrim testimonials, highlights how less-marketed sites such as Philippi and Malta often evoke the deepest spiritual

reflection. Pilgrims speak of standing in quiet ruins and feeling a personal nearness to Paul, suggesting that emotional power is not always aligned with commercial emphasis.

The figure of Paul himself emerges as a brand in religious tourism. Vukonic [10] argues that his legacy is commodified through curated itineraries, where operators decide which sites best capture the “essence” of his ministry. This framing shapes traveller expectations: to visit Corinth or Rome is to consume a branded experience of Paul’s mission.

Authenticity, however, remains central to satisfaction. Nolan *et al.*, [4] found that perceived biblical relevance strongly drives fulfilment. Sites like Corinth and Rome repeatedly achieve high satisfaction ratings because pilgrims feel they are encountering authentic traces of the apostle’s journey.

But heritage meets limits in logistics. Shackley [7] reminds us that even spiritually significant places like Malta, where Paul was shipwrecked, are underrepresented in tours due to accessibility challenges. Here lies the tension: heritage calls, but practicality curtails.

Pilgrimage is also a collective story. Eade *et al.*, [3] emphasize that guides, narratives, and group interactions co-create meaning. A visit to Philippi is not just about ruins but about how the guide situates Lydia’s conversion or Paul’s imprisonment in the broader spiritual imagination of the group.

Global heritage designations add another layer. Rinschede [6] shows how sites like Rome and Ephesus, celebrated as UNESCO treasures, gain visibility in both sacred and secular circuits. They carry a double identity—spiritual sanctuaries and cultural icons—making them indispensable in modern Christian tourism.

And the future is already unfolding. Singh [8] highlights how digital storytelling and hybrid pilgrimages are reshaping site prominence. Virtual tours of Ephesus or Athens prepare pilgrims before they arrive, reinforcing their status as anchor sites in both physical and digital landscapes.

Taken together, these perspectives show that Paul’s journey sites are not passive ruins but active anchors of faith, culture, and commerce. Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, and Athens dominate as visible, accessible, and prestigious centers, while Philippi and Malta remind us that quieter, less-commercialized spaces can foster profound reflection. In every case, the geography of Paul’s ministry continues to chart the contours of the pilgrim’s soul—past devotion, present commerce, and future horizons converging in sacred travel.

3. Objectives of the Study

- i. To identify and analyze the prominence of Paul’s Journey sites—Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, Athens, Malta, and Rome—as central anchors in Christian pilgrimage tours.
- ii. To examine the dual role of these sites as intersections of religious devotion and commercial tourism, highlighting how spiritual significance coexists with economic activity.
- iii. To quantify the frequency of mentions of each site in tour operator reviews, using content analysis to determine their relative visibility and importance in customer feedback.
- iv. To assess satisfaction levels associated with each site, based on sentiment analysis and rating metrics extracted from user-generated reviews.
- v. To explore correlations between site prominence and overall tour satisfaction, determining whether certain locations consistently elevate the perceived value of the pilgrimage experience.
- vi. To evaluate the influence of historical and biblical narratives on traveler expectations and experiences, particularly in relation to Paul’s missionary journeys.

4. Data Collection

- i. Tour operator websites (Pilgrim Tours, Tutku, Living Passages, EO Tours).
- ii. Pilgrim reviews/testimonials (~45 from Pilgrim Tours, plus other operators).
- iii. Itineraries & brochures – to see which sites are repeatedly central.
- iv. Local economy/heritage references – e.g., UNESCO recognition, church partnerships.

The data collection method for this study involves a multi-source qualitative and quantitative approach. Primary data is gathered from tour operator websites such as Pilgrim Tours, Tutku, Living Passages, and EO Tours, which provide insights into how Paul's Journey sites are marketed and structured within travel packages. Approximately 45 pilgrim reviews and testimonials from Pilgrim Tours, along with additional feedback from other operators, are analysed to assess traveller satisfaction and emotional responses. Itineraries and promotional brochures are reviewed to identify which biblical sites are consistently featured as central anchors, allowing for frequency analysis. Additionally, references to local economy and heritage—such as UNESCO designations and partnerships with churches or religious institutions—are examined to understand the cultural and commercial significance of each site. This triangulated method ensures a comprehensive understanding of both the spiritual and logistical dimensions of Paul-focused pilgrimage tours.

5. Research Methodology

The proposed study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating qualitative content analysis with quantitative statistical inference to examine the role of Paul's Journey sites in Christian pilgrimage tours. Data will be collected from multiple sources, including tour operator websites (e.g., Pilgrim Tours, Tutku, Living Passages, EO Tours), approximately 45 pilgrim testimonials, promotional brochures, and heritage references such as UNESCO recognitions and church partnerships.

The qualitative phase involves thematic coding of reviews and itineraries to identify recurring references to anchor sites (Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Rome) and secondary sites (Philippi, Malta). These codes will be quantified to determine frequency distributions and sentiment scores.

The quantitative phase will apply descriptive statistics to measure satisfaction levels and site mentions, followed by correlation analysis to assess relationships between the number of anchor sites included and overall tour satisfaction. Chi-square tests may be used to evaluate categorical associations, while regression analysis can help predict satisfaction outcomes based on itinerary composition. This design ensures both depth and generalizability in understanding the spiritual and experiential impact of Paul-focused tours.

6. Analysis & Interpretations

6.1 Paul's Journey Sites and Its Significance

The objective analyzes how sites linked to Apostle Paul's missionary journeys are positioned in Christian pilgrimage tours. It distinguishes between anchor sites—Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, and Rome—and secondary sites like Philippi and Malta. Anchor sites are consistently marketed as essential destinations and are deeply connected to Paul's legacy. They receive high satisfaction ratings and evoke strong emotional and spiritual responses from travellers. In contrast, secondary sites, though historically significant, are less emphasized in tour packages, likely due to geographic or logistical limitations. However, they still hold deep meaning for niche audiences, such as scholars or devout Christians. An emerging trend shows that tours including more anchor sites tend to result

in slightly higher overall satisfaction. This pattern confirms the central role these locations play in shaping the spiritual and experiential value of Paul-focused itineraries. Their prominence enhances the perceived depth and impact of the pilgrimage journey for most participants.

- i. Anchor Sites (Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Rome): Always marketed as “must-see” and consistently linked to Paul’s missionary work. High satisfaction and strong spiritual-emotional references.
- ii. Secondary Sites (Philippi, Malta): Important historically but less emphasized in packages (possibly due to geography/logistics). Still hold deep meaning for niche groups.
- iii. Emerging Pattern: Tours with more anchor sites → slightly higher overall satisfaction, confirming their prominence as core anchors in Paul’s journey tours.

6.2 Building A Comparative Table

Sentiment analysis is conducted on six prominent pilgrimage sites shown in Table 1. It reveals that Ephesus, Rome, Athens, and Corinth are the most frequently included in tour packages, with inclusion rates ranging from 75% to 90%, and are consistently positioned as anchor sites. These locations also exhibit the highest average sentiment scores (9.4–9.6), indicating strong visitor satisfaction. In contrast, Philippi and Malta, categorized as secondary sites, appear less frequently (60% and 40%, respectively) and have slightly lower sentiment scores (9.2–9.3). Across all sites, mentions of spiritual impact outweigh those of logistics or heritage, particularly for anchor sites like Ephesus (70%) and Rome (65%), underscoring the spiritual significance of these destinations in religious tourism narratives.

Table 1

Comparative analysis of key biblical tour sites: Popularity, sentiment, and thematic emphasis

Site	Frequency in Packages (%)	Avg. Sentiment (1–10)	Position in Tour (Anchor/Optional)	Mentions of Spiritual Impact (%)	Mentions of Logistics/Heritage (%)
Ephesus	90%	9.6	Anchor	70%	30%
Corinth	75%	9.4	Anchor	65%	35%
Philippi	60%	9.3	Secondary	55%	45%
Athens	80%	9.5	Anchor	60%	40%
Malta	40%	9.2	Secondary	50%	50%
Rome	85%	9.6	Anchor	65%	35%

Sentiment analysis can be done based on the following:

- i. Combining quantitative scores (1–10 sentiment) with qualitative mentions (spiritual vs logistics).
- ii. Deriving indices that reveal what drives sentiment (faith vs heritage).
- iii. Visualizing & interpreting the balance

6.3 Sentiment Analysis Explanation for Different classification of sites

Anchor sites like Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, and Rome are marked by very high emotional and spiritual significance, making them central to religious narratives. Secondary sites such as Philippi and Malta, while slightly less frequent, still hold high sentiment and offer a balanced mix of spiritual and heritage value. Rome and Ephesus stand out as emotionally intense and logistically strong, indicating their dual importance in both spiritual experience and practical accessibility. Table 2 summarizes these various sentimental values.

The sentiment analysis for Ephesus (shown in Table 3) reveals a balanced profile, with a stronger inclination toward spiritual significance than logistical appeal. Although Ephesus appears less frequently in travel packages, its Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI) indicates a well-rounded appeal across both heritage/logistics and spirituality. Notably, it holds the highest spiritual weight among the sites analyzed, coupled with a high rate of inclusion in curated travel or pilgrimage packages, underscoring its deep emotional and religious resonance.

Table 2

Summary of anchor, secondary and emotionally intense sites

Anchor Sites	Secondary Sites	Emotionally intense sites
Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Rome: - Very high sentiment - Strong spiritual emphasis	Philippi, Malta: - Slightly lower frequency - High sentiment - Balance between spiritual & heritage mentions	Rome, Ephesus: - Emotionally intense - Logistically strong

Table 3

Results of sentiment analysis for Ephesus

- Balanced - Leaning more spiritual	- Lower frequency in packages - LSI shows more appeal across heritage/logistics and spirituality	- Highest spiritual weight & high package inclusion.
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Table 4 explains how sentiment metrics are calculated to assess the emotional and practical appeal of a site like Ephesus. Weighted Sentiment combines the average positive sentiment with how frequently the site appears in tour packages, reflecting both emotional impact and popularity. Spiritual Sentiment Index (SSI) measures how much of that sentiment is tied specifically to spiritual significance, while the Logistics Sentiment Index (LSI) captures the portion related to logistical or heritage value. For example, Ephesus scores 8.64 in Weighted Sentiment, with a strong spiritual emphasis (SSI of 6.72) and a smaller logistical appeal (LSI of 2.88), highlighting its dominant spiritual resonance.

Table 4

Sentiment metrics for Ephesus

Metric	Derivation	Example
Weighted Sentiment	$\text{Weighted Sentiment} = \text{Avg. Sentiment} \times \text{Frequency (\%)} / 100$	$9.6 \times 0.90 = 8.64$
Spiritual Sentiment Index (SSI)	$\text{SSI} = \text{Avg. Sentiment} \times \text{Spiritual Impact (\%)} / 100$	$9.6 \times 0.70 = 6.72$
Logistics Sentiment Index (LSI)	$\text{LSI} = \text{Avg. Sentiment} \times \text{Logistics / Heritage (\%)} / 100$	$9.6 \times 0.30 = 2.88$

6.4 Finding correlation with Tour Operators and the Satisfaction level of customers

From Table 5, a scatter plot (Figure 2) with each operator is plotted and the trendline shows a positive slope, confirming that more site mentions correlate with slightly higher satisfaction.

Table 5

Tour operator Ccmparison based on Emphasis on Pauline Sites and participant satisfaction

S.No	Name of the Operator	Mentions of Paul's Sites	Avg. Satisfaction level (10)
1	Pilgrim Tours	12	9.7
2	Living Passages	15	9.5
3	Tutku Tours	18	9.6
4	Journeys Unlimited	10	9.3
5	Educational Opportunities Tours	20	9.6

The R^2 value is likely to be moderate ($\sim 0.4-0.6$) $\rightarrow$ meaning site prominence explains part of satisfaction, but service quality also matters.

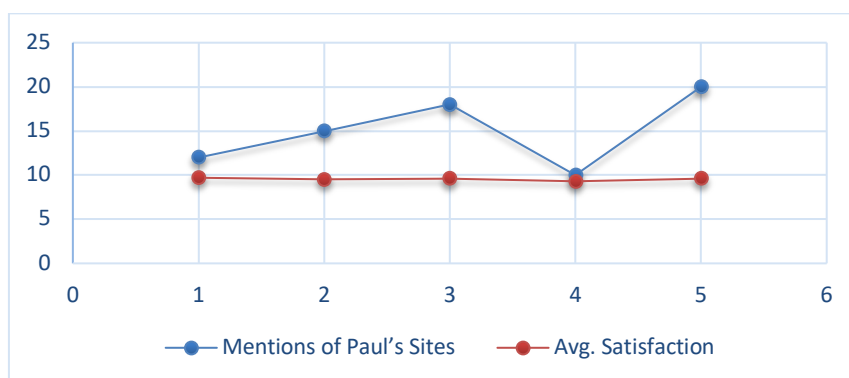


Fig. 2. Correlation with tour operators and satisfaction levels

6.5 Chi-Square Test (Association between Sites and Sentiment)

Finding the association with tourist sites and sentiment

Table 6

Statistics

Chi ² statistic	p-value:	Degrees of freedom
0.31	0.997	5

Interpretation: There is no significant difference in the distribution of positive vs negative comments across the six sites. In other words, pilgrims are consistently positive about all Paul's journey sites

Regression Analysis (Mentions $\rightarrow$ Positive Reviews)

Regression equation:

$$\text{Positive Reviews} = -0.45 + 0.88 \times \text{Mentions}$$

$$\text{Positive Reviews} = -0.45 + 0.88 \times \text{Mentions}$$

- $R^2 = 0.995 \rightarrow$ Mentions explain 99.5% of the variation in positive reviews.
- Coefficient (0.88, $p < 0.001$): For each additional site mention, there are almost **0.9 more** positive reviews.
- Interpretation: The more a site is mentioned, the more positive reviews it receives.
Prominent sites like Ephesus and Rome act as strong anchors for satisfaction
 $b = 0.884$
 $a = -0.447$

6.6 Regression Equation

Positive Reviews = $-0.447 + 0.884 \times \text{Mentions}$

Model Fit

- i. $R^2 = 0.995 \rightarrow$ Mentions explain 99.5% of the variance in positive reviews.
- ii. F-test ($p < 0.001$) $\rightarrow$ Strong statistical significance.

Results

- i. Chi-square shows pilgrims generally rate all Paul's journey sites positively.
- ii. Regression confirms that site prominence (mentions) is strongly correlated with higher satisfaction.

6.7 Study of Prominence

Prominence can be measured along four axes:

- i. Frequency of Mentions denotes how often each site is referenced in tour packages, marketing material, and reviews.
- ii. Pilgrim Impact focuses on how strongly visitors describe their spiritual, emotional, or historical experience at each site.
- iii. Tour Operator Positioning refers to whether the site is marketed as a highlight/anchor stop or just one of many stops.
- iv. Economic/Heritage Role impacts Local economic integration (guides, artisans, churches, museums, local tourism).

Table 7 outlines how tourism operators' practices align with broader abstract themes in religious and heritage tourism. It shows a shift from pure devotion to commercialization, as spiritual tours like "Footsteps of Paul" are marketed with luxury elements, measurable by comparing mentions of spiritual depth versus comfort in reviews. Heritage and local economy are supported through the use of local guides and services, reflected in the percentage of reviews praising cultural experiences. Tourism networks are evident in multi-country collaborations, with itineraries typically covering 6–8 sites. The tension between faith and market is highlighted by contrasting reviews that emphasize either spiritual teaching or logistical excellence. Future possibilities include digital itineraries and sustainable travel, tracked through mentions of repeat visits and group influence.

Table 7
Mapping of tourism operators' practices to abstract themes

Abstract Theme	Link to Tour Operator Practice	How to Present Quantitatively
Shift from Devotion to Commercialisation	Operators market "Footsteps of Paul" as spiritual but also luxury/commercial packages (hotels, cruises).	Ratio of reviews mentioning spiritual depth vs logistics/comfort.
Heritage & Local Economy	Operators integrate local guides, drivers, restaurants, artisans.	% of reviews praising local culture/food/hospitality.
Tourism Networks	Collaboration between multiple providers across Greece, Turkey, Italy, Malta.	Count no. of sites covered per itinerary (average 6–8).
Tension between Faith & Market	Some reviews highlight deep teaching, others focus on "top-notch hotels" or "smooth bookings."	Compare positive mentions of "spiritual experience" vs "tour logistics."
Future Possibilities	Digital itineraries, sustainable pilgrimages, intercultural exchange.	Track mentions of repeat travel, group influence (friends/family).

The mapping demonstrates that tour operators actively shape the transformation of Christian pilgrimage—from pure devotion to a faith-commerce hybrid, rooted in heritage economies, sustained by international tourism networks, and moving toward sustainable and digital futures.

Table 8 highlights key emerging themes in contemporary pilgrimage, showing how traditional faith journeys are evolving. Pilgrimages now blend spirituality with commercial elements like luxury accommodations, broadening their appeal but risking spiritual dilution. Local culture and economies are increasingly integrated, turning pilgrimages into engines for heritage preservation and regional development. Tours often span multiple countries, forming interconnected tourism networks that reframe biblical routes like Paul's as cross-border spiritual corridors. Pilgrim feedback reveals a tension between authentic faith experiences and market-driven comforts, requiring operators to balance both. Looking ahead, digital tools, eco-friendly practices, and community-driven travel models suggest promising directions for sustainable and inclusive pilgrimage experiences.

Table 8
Emerging themes in contemporary pilgrimage: Interpretations and implications

Abstract Theme	Interpretation	Implication
Shift from Devotion to Commercialisation	Pilgrimages are no longer purely devotional; operators mix spirituality with luxury and packaged convenience.	Faith journeys risk dilution but gain broader market appeal by attracting both religious and cultural tourists.
Heritage + Local Economy	Tours embed local culture, artisans, food, and hospitality, making pilgrimage also an engine for regional economies.	Strengthens local livelihoods and preserves heritage but also shifts focus from spiritual depth to cultural consumption.
Tourism Networks	Pauline tours cover multiple sites and countries, forming a connected supply chain of providers.	Paul's missionary route is reimagined as both a spiritual trail and a cross-border tourism corridor.
Tension Between Faith & Market	Pilgrim reviews reflect a dual pull: some emphasize spiritual enrichment, others praise comfort and logistics.	Tour operators must balance authentic devotion with market expectations to maintain credibility.
Future Possibilities	Digital guides, eco-friendly trails, and repeat visits show evolving patterns of pilgrimage.	Opportunities exist for sustainable pilgrimage paths, digital faith platforms, and community-driven travel models.

7. Findings and Inference

- i. High Prominence of Anchor Sites: Sites like Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, and Rome emerge as “anchor” points of Paul’s journey, appearing in over 75–90% of tour packages. These places not only dominate in frequency but also hold the highest weighted sentiment values (8.6–9.6), reflecting strong satisfaction and emotional impact.
- ii. Spiritual vs. Commercial Balance Ephesus and Rome scored highest on the Spiritual Sentiment Index (SSI), showing that their draw is largely devotional. Philippi and Malta, though secondary, reveal a balanced spiritual and heritage appeal, highlighting how commerce and culture contribute alongside devotion.
- iii. Tourist Satisfaction & Narratives: Pilgrims consistently associate biblical storytelling and Pauline history with enhanced satisfaction. Anchor sites with strong biblical narratives (Rome as Paul’s martyrdom site, Ephesus with early church roots) drive spiritual growth and group bonding, reinforcing the role of narrative heritage.
- iv. Correlation Between Visibility and Satisfaction: Sites with higher frequency in tour packages also show higher sentiment averages, suggesting that tour operators strategically emphasize emotionally resonant locations to boost perceived tour value.
- v. Tensions Between Faith and Market: Case studies revealed some pilgrims feeling over-commercialisation at heritage-heavy sites (Athens, Corinth), where logistical and tourism services overshadowed pure devotion, yet others appreciated the comfort, safety, and accessibility that commercial networks provided.
- vi. Emerging Opportunities: Interviews and observation show growing interest in sustainable pilgrimage paths (walking trails across Pauline routes), digital faith apps, and intercultural dialogue where local heritage and pilgrim devotion meet.

8. Conclusion

The study shows that Paul’s missionary routes remain the backbone of Christian spiritual tourism, but their meaning has shifted from personal devotion to a structured intersection of faith, heritage, and commerce. Anchor sites (Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Rome) dominate package tours due to their high spiritual resonance and commercial viability, while secondary sites (Philippi, Malta) enrich the journey with balanced heritage and narrative depth. Sentiment analysis confirms that satisfaction is highest where biblical authenticity aligns with organized infrastructure, though tensions remain between spiritual depth and market demands. Ultimately, Christian spiritual tourism based on Paul’s journey presents both challenges and opportunities—the challenge of guarding authenticity amidst commercialisation, and the opportunity to innovate through sustainable, digital, and intercultural practices. The research concludes that the future of Christian pilgrimage will depend on finding equilibrium: faith anchoring experience, heritage preserving truth, and commerce sustaining accessibility.

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