Visitor diversification in pilgrimage destinations:

A national segmentation study through means-end theory in Nakahechi trail, Kumano Kodo

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巡礼道における観光客の多様化：

熊野古道中辺路においての「means-end theory」による国別研究

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Abstract

This present research aims to study the diversification in visitor profile in pilgrimage destination through national segmentation. The study is situated within the field of pilgrimage tourism. The research is based on four premises, which were drawn from the literature review on the subject of contemporary spirituality and pilgrimage tourism. Firstly, due to the changes in the role of religion in contemporary society, there is a diversification in both motivation and behavior in pilgrimage sites. Secondly, as sacred sites become international tourism destinations, its visitors have also become diversified. Visitors now may have little religious or cultural connection to the area. Thirdly, despite the importance of inbound tourism in pilgrimage sites, national segmentation and cross-national analysis have not been researched in the field of spirituality and tourism, with previous research mostly utilizing categorizations based on belief or general travel motivation. However, nationality is observed to be a key factor when performing tourist segmentation in different areas. Fourthly, the Asia-Pacific region holds an immense importance in the tourism industry and a great potential for pilgrimage tourism development, but it is an understudied area.

On this basis, the present research aims to demonstrate the diversification in contemporary pilgrimage related tourism regarding visitor's motivation and behavior, and contribute to the academic discussion on spiritual tourism through proving the importance and applicability of national segmentation of visitors in pilgrimage sites. Qualitative methodology was chosen, based on previous research carried out mostly with quantitative methodologies. In particular, as means-end has been effectively used for national segmentation and cross-national studies, it was deemed as a suitable methodology for the present study. Fieldwork was mainly carried out at the Takahara community, located in Tanabe city, Wakayama prefecture. Regarding the visitors, the two most numerous groups, Japanese (domestic) and Australian (international), were selected to be studied.

Through means-end, results showed differences and similarities among both sampled groups, showing the validity of national segmentation for the study of visitor diversification in pilgrimage tourism. In particular, in-site knowledge and support from stakeholders was found to be indispensable. The research results demonstrated important implications for both academia and tourism policies. Finally, research limitations are addressed.

概要

本研究は「巡礼ツーリズム」の研究分野において、巡礼デスティネーションにおける観光客の多様化を別国で研究することを目的とする。本研究は四つの視点に基づいている。第一に、今日「スピリチュアリティ」は宗教的意味を超え、多様化している。これは現代における巡礼道への来訪者の動機および行動の多様化によるものが大きい。第二に、巡礼道は国内外から多くの観光客が訪問する観光地となった。これは多くの聖地、宗教地や記念碑などにも見られる現象である。第三に、巡礼地はインバウンド観光において重要性が高いにもかかわらず、スピリチュアリティや巡礼ツーリズムの分野において国別「cross-national」分析は研究されていない。先行研究の多くは信仰にかかわる旅行動機に基づく分類を行ってきたが、「国」は、さまざまな分野で観光客のセグメンテーションを実行する際に重要な要素であることが認められている。第四に、アジア太平洋地域は優れた観光発展を遂げてきており、当地域には国内外観光者を対象とする宗教的現象や行事に訪れる観光客や巡礼者が最も多く存在する。しかしながら、アジアの巡礼道についての研究は未だ少数である。

二つの研究ギャップも見られた。第一に、先行研究ではゲストの国の重要性と、日本やその他の場所の巡礼デスティネーションにおいてのインバウンドビジターの存在が示されながら、巡礼における国別分析を適用する研究が欠如している。第二に、現在観光において重要性が認識されながら、アジアの巡礼地での研究は欠如している。本研究ではアジアの巡礼道における観光客の国別区分の大切さと適用性を実証により分析することにより、観光者の動機や行動に起因する現代の巡礼ツーリズムの多様化を示し、宗教・スピリチュアルツーリズムへの理論的貢献をめざす。ここで適用する「means-end」は国別区分及び国別比較の研究で利用されており、本研究に適切であると判断した。

現地調査は和歌山県田辺市における高原コミュニティを中心に行った。田辺市は世界遺産(2004 年登録)熊野古道中辺路におけるインバウンドツーリズムの推進を中心に発展してきており、「観光地化」、「国際来訪者の増加」が明らかである「巡礼道」としてふさわしい事例であると考えた。観光客は、国内（日本人）、海外（オーストラリア）の 2 グループについて調査を行った。

Means-end を通じ、結果は２グループ間で相違及び類似点が示され、巡礼ツーリズムの観光客プロフィールの研究に国別分析は有効であることが明らかとなった。本研究の結果は観光学術と観光戦略にとって重要な示唆がある。本論では本研究の学術及び観光政策における重要性を示し、最後に本研究の限界も確認する。

目次

Preface

The path to the completion of a PhD thesis is, as fellow academics would certainly agree, a complex process that has both unexpected challenges and discoveries along the way. For the researcher, however, the start of this thesis was a journey as well. The researcher had an interest in Japanese culture since his childhood and decided to start studying the language as a pastime during the end of high school. Having graduated from Asian Studies in Argentina, he had a longing to jump from books to the actual fieldwork in order to conduct research in Japan regarding the contemporary meaning and utilization of its cultural aspects. For this purpose, tourism proved to be both an unexpected and suitable academic field. Having decided to venture into a new academic field, the researcher arrived in 2013 to Japan.

After arriving to Wakayama University, he began to travel around the prefecture for study and leisure, as well as reading different materials about its locations. While there was a wide range of interesting places in the prefecture, the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage in particular caught the researcher's attention, as there was little academic material on it at the time, especially in non-Japanese sources. The pilgrimage was also experiencing a rapid development in inbound tourism, particularly after its registration as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in 2004. Because of these factors, different nationalities, particularly those from Western nations, were visiting the area. This sparked interest in the researcher. Why would Western visitors come all the way down to the Kii peninsula, relatively far from the main tourism destinations, and undertake the pilgrimage? What was attractive to them about a place that had little to no cultural ties with them? What they were experiencing while traveling? These questions were the start for the thesis objective, which was carried out during the course of three years: examine visitor diversification in pilgrimage sites through national segmentation. As the researcher read about the subject, he realized that, surprisingly enough, no study in pilgrimage tourism utilized national segmentation to analyze visitors, even when it is widely recognized that sacred sites have become important international destinations.

During this time, the researcher visited the Kumano area several times. In particular, the Nakahechi segment located in Tanabe city, Wakayama, was visited the most because it was selected as the case study. During the visits, the researcher met the different stakeholders in Tanabe related to tourism development in Kumano Kodo, from officials from local tourism organizations to guesthouse owners and Shinto priests. Each of them shared their valuable viewpoints and observations. However, to accomplish the research objective, it was of central importance to contact the visitors and analyze their statements. For this, the researcher conducted fieldwork, including 3 weeks of intensive live-in placement at a popular guesthouse located in the Takahara community. During his stay, he interviewed Australian and Japanese visitors, the most numerous nationalities. The methodological approach employed for this fieldwork was means-end, a qualitative methodology that provided a suitable method to obtain rich descriptions in their own words.

Through this study, a range of interesting perspectives was obtained about the diversification of visitors in pilgrimage sites. In particular, the employment of qualitative methodology provided valuable richness to the study findings, showing the particular strength of qualitative research. It is the hope of the researcher that this study can be of valuable for academic, policy-makers and the public interested in the relation between pilgrimage and tourism. For the researcher himself, these last three years writing this study have been both a challenge and a rewarding experience. His sincere wish is that this is reflected in the study.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. 1. Research background and objectives

The present study originated from the researcher's observations on the contemporary relationship between pilgrimage and tourism, especially in Japan. Academic literature reports an increasing diversification of visitors to pilgrimage sites, as traditional religious beliefs lose their predominant position in contemporary society (Hanegraaff, 2000; Houtman & Manscini, 2002; Heelas, 2006; Okamoto, 2015). Because of this, visitors to sacred sites, no longer under the influence of traditional religious narratives, exhibit a variety of motivations and behavior during their travel. Secular motivations, such as sports or leisure, may replace or coexist with motivations that are more religious. Motivations and behavior related to contemporary spirituality is also a growing phenomenon in sacred sites.

At the same time, as sacred locations such as pilgrimage sites become tourism resources, international visitors, who may have few or no religious motivations, are visiting them in increasing numbers. Advances in health care, economic situation and mass transport systems have facilitated the access to pilgrimage locations (Mori, 2005; Reader, 2007; Stausberg, 2011), contributing to their growth. Due to these factors, pilgrimage has emerged as a key tourism phenomenon in contemporary society (Collins-Kreiner & Wall, 2015). In consequence, pilgrimage-related sites have become important tourism destinations that attract both a wide range of visitors of different nationalities and motivations, leading to a diversification in tourist profiles.

While there are many important pilgrimage sites across the world, the Asia-Pacific area has the greatest number of pilgrims and travelers for religious events, for both international and domestic tourism (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2012). Also, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the Global Tourism Research Center (2017), this region has become the second most visited regions after Europe, as well as the fastest growing, registering a 9% growth in 2016, which accounts for 308 million arrivals. This shows the great importance of pilgrimage-related tourism in Asia-Pacific, as well as its immense opportunities to for academic research on the subject. However, research on pilgrimage tourism is considered scarce in the Asia-Pacific area (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2011).

In this context of significant tourism development in Asia-Pacific, the Japanese government has been promoting tourism, particular inbound, to revitalize regional economies suffering of low economic activity and ageing population, and assist in the recovery of areas affected by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami disaster (Prime Minister of Japan and Cabinet, 2012). At the same time, in Japan, pilgrimage is both a centuries-old tradition and an important aspect of contemporary tourism development, principally in rural areas. In particular, different pilgrimage-related destinations have been aiming to achieve a World Heritage designation from UNESCO in recent years, in order to boost both domestic and international visitors (Mori, 2005; Okamoto, 2015).

Through an analysis of the research background stated above and literature review on pilgrimage tourism, the researcher found two main research gaps. Firstly, a lack of studies that utilize national segmentation in pilgrimage sites, despite previous studies demonstrating the importance of the guest's country of origin in tourism studies and the presence of inbound visitors in pilgrimage-related destinations. Secondly, a lack of studies about Asian pilgrimage sites, despite their importance in contemporary tourism.

This general context provides an opportunity for conducting research visitor diversification in a Japanese pilgrimage destination that can cover these research gaps, and have both academic and practical implications. The present research aims to investigate the diversification in contemporary pilgrimage tourism regarding visitor's motivation and behavior in an Asian location, specifically in Japan, and thus contribute to the academic discussion on pilgrimage tourism. In order to accomplish this objective, the research presents a study based on national segmentation through a qualitative methodology, means-end. However, in order to do so, it is important to carefully select an appropriate case study to carry out as well. Among the different pilgrimage sites that are being developed as tourism destinations, the Nakahechi trail of the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage was selected as case study to conduct fieldwork.

1. 2. Presentation of case study

As mentioned before, fieldwork was carried out in the Nakahechi section of the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage trail located in Tanabe city, Wakayama prefecture. The site was chosen for four reasons. First, Tanabe city has been actively aiming to attract international visitors, particularly Western. The presence of large numbers of Western tourists would facilitate finding the necessary participants to interview and in consequence facilitate qualitative fieldwork. Secondly, pilgrimage routes and sites constitute its main tourism resource (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018). Therefore, it can be expected that the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage plays a central role in Tanabe' tourism development, thus making the location suitable for conducting research on pilgrimage tourism. Thirdly, the Nakahechi route in Tanabe city (around 45 kilometers) has clearly defined pilgrimage paths, which provided a clearly delineated fieldwork site. In consequence, selecting places where visitors would likely gather would be an easier task for the researcher. Fourthly, the selected section of Nakahechi route is a popular route among tourists because of its cultural significance, easy access and moderate challenge (Kato & Progano, 2017).

Two nationalities, Australian and Japanese, were sampled on the basis that it would cover both domestic and international visitors, and thus be in line with the research objective. Secondly, because they are most numerous nationalities, they will be easier to locate, facilitating fieldwork. Thirdly, a study on them would be an important practical contribution for the local DMO. Fourthly, the researcher himself is proficient in both English and Japanese, which would be of great help to conduct the interviews and the thematic analysis.

1. 3. Research structure

The research is divided in eight chapters, including the current one. Each following chapter contains an introduction, in which the main objectives of the corresponding chapter are presented, and a conclusion, in which the main points of the chapter are summarized.

Chapter 2 presents the case study for the current research: the Nakahechi trail of Kumano Kodo, located in Tanabe city, Wakayama prefecture. Firstly, an introduction to the history and characteristics of Kumano Kodo is presented to provide context for its subsequent tourism development. Next is a presentation of Tanabe city and its current tourism development, as well as a description on its domestic and international visitors. Finally, the rational for choosing Tanabe city as a case study for the present research are explained, which have been briefly mentioned in this Introduction.

Chapter 3 explains the current research methodology and approach to fieldwork. As it was mentioned, means-end, a qualitative methodology, was chosen to carry out this study. Therefore, an explanation on means-end theory, its methodology and the reasons for choosing it are described. Next, the details on fieldwork are presented. As the study's fieldwork would take place in an outdoor setting, the mountainous forests of the Nakahechi trail, choosing an adequate approach to fieldwork was of great importance for successfully carrying out the present study. It was also decided to carry out a simple questionnaire on the participants' socio-demographics in order to contextualize the obtained data. Consequently, the questionnaire's structure is briefly explained.

Chapter 4 describes the literature review, focusing on two mains areas. Firstly, spirituality in contemporary society and its relationship with pilgrimage tourism are explained in detail. It is argued that, in contemporary spirituality, traditional narratives have lost their predominant position for interpreting spirituality and sacred sites, leading to individuals to 'create' their own systems of beliefs from different sources. As a result, motivation to travel to pilgrimage sites has been noted to be increasingly diversified, and not necessarily connect to the traditional narratives. At the same time, pilgrimage sites have become important tourism destinations, attracting international visitors as well as visitors not motivated by traditional faith. This has led to a great diversification of visitors in pilgrimage-related tourism, who do not only show a diverse set of motivations and values, but also different nationalities, which has been described by previous research as a key feature to understand visitor profiles. In relation to this, secondly the importance of the tourists' nationality as a segmentation tool for both marketing and academic studies is explained by referring to previous studies.

Chapter 5 explains the study's theoretical framework by explaining the academic research that guide it in five areas: the concept of pilgrimage, visitor diversification in pilgrimage sites, local perception of pilgrimage tourism, national segmentation and methodology. By clearly explaining the theoretical framework, the researcher aims to make the study more cohesive and understandable. The utilized academic research for the theoretical framework is mainly drawn from Chapter 4.

Chapter 6 presents the study's findings. Firstly, the results of the questionnaires carried out for both Australian and Japanese participants are shown. Secondly, the findings from the thematic analysis carried out on the laddering interviews are described. Next, utilizing the obtained data, the implication matrices and Hierarchical Value Maps (HVM) are built and shown. In particular, the HVMs constitute the main finding of the research and are of central importance for the academic discussion carried out in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 contains an academic discussion on the findings related to the literature reviewed, based on previous studies, secondary sources and the researcher's observations done during fieldwork. Firstly, a brief discussion on the findings from the questionnaires is carried out, although it is not the primary objective of this research. Next, a discussion on the HVMs is carried out by analyzing each of its attributes individually, along with their related elements. Similarities and differences between each sampled nationality are taken into consideration. During the discussion of the different topics, quotations from the participants are included to emphasize and support specific points.

Chapter 8 presents the study's conclusions, in which the main findings are explained in response to the research objectives. Firstly, the main conclusions, drawn from the discussions in Chapter 7, are explained. Research limitations are also mentioned to help understand the boundaries of this research. Next, implications for future researchers are mentioned. Implications for policy-makers are explained as well, to give practical consequences not only for Tanabe city, but for other pilgrimage-related destinations as well. To conclude the study, final remarks from the researcher are presented.

Finally, for further contextualization and analysis, the present study incorporates three studies on different aspects of pilgrimage tourism conducted in Kumano Kodo by the researcher (Progano & Kato, 2018; Progano, 2018a; Progano, 2018b). Progano and Kato (2018) explain the intersections between contemporary spirituality and pilgrimage tourism by taking the current development in Kumano Kodo as case study. Different sections were incorporated in Chapters 4, 7 and 8 in order to clarify the relationship between spirituality and contemporary tourism in sacred sites, such as pilgrimages. Next, Progano (2018a) describes the Japanese DMO registration system by taking as case study the local DMO of Tanabe city, which is currently developing Kumano Kodo to domestic and international tourists. From this study, important insights regarding Tanabe's tourism policies and current situation are incorporated in Chapters 2, 7 and 8 in order to better understand its tourism development, contextualize the research's findings and support the implications for policy-makers. Thirdly, Progano (2018b) investigates the community's perceptions of socio-economic impacts in a pilgrimage-related destination by taking as case study the Chikatsuyu community, located along the Nakahechi trail of Kumano Kodo, in Tanabe city. From this study, important perspectives regarding the community's view on pilgrimage tourism were incorporated in Chapters 4 and 7 in order to provide to the present research a wider perspective on tourism development and contextualize the research's findings. By incorporating these three studies, the present research encompasses different themes related to pilgrimage tourism, particularly in Kumano Kodo, in order to provide a richer background of exposition and discussion on the main theme.

Chapter 2: Research context: Nakahechi trail, Kumano Kodo

2. 1. Introduction

This chapter presents the selected case study: Nakahechi pilgrimage route section located in Tanabe city, Wakayama prefecture, Japan. Firstly, a historical outline of Kumano Kodo as a pilgrimage route is provided. Then, Kumano Kodo's initial modern tourism development, associated with national parks, is explained to introduce its designation as part of the 'Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range' UNESCO World Heritage Site, which was especially relevant for attracting international tourists to Kumano Kodo. Secondly, Tanabe city's current tourism policies and their relationship to international tourism are discussed. Although scarce, tourism statistics, based on prefectural and local data, are discussed to understand the visitors' profile. Finally, rationale for selecting Tanabe city's Nakahechi route as a suitable case study is explained.

2. 2. Background of Kumano Kodo

2. 2. 1. Kumano Kodo pilgrimage routes' history

While the meaning of Kodo (古道) as 'ancient road' is straightforward, the term Kumano is not as simple. From reading its Kanji (Chinese character) in Japanese, 熊野, the first Kanji means 'bear' (*kuma*) and the second one, 'field' or 'plain' (*no*). Therefore, Kumano would seem to mean 'field of bears'. However, academics point out that the meaning of the term Kumano is more complex than it may see at first glance. Koyama (2000) explains that the first Kanji, *kuma*, is in fact derived from another Kanji, 隈, also read as *kuma*. However, this Kanji refers to 'far-off places'. The second Kanji, *no*, has a secondary meaning as 'places undeveloped by civilization'. Therefore, Kumano refers to a wilderness area, far from the urban centers.

Kumano Kodo is a multi-site pilgrimage route structured around three main sacred sites, which constitute the goals of travelers: Kumano Hongu Taisha (now located in Tanabe city), Kumano Hayatama Taisha (Shingu city) and Kumano Nachi Taisha (in Nachikatsura town). The three shrines originally developed as independent sites, but since the Heian period, they are seen as a single group (Miyake, 1992). Since then, they are called the Three Mountains of Kumano (*Kumano Sanzan*). Each of these grand shrines is dedicated to one of the three deities of Kumano (*Kumano Gongen*), which are also associated with three particular Buddhas themselves. These main pilgrimage sites are linked through three main routes. The Kiiji route is comprised three sub-routes: Nakahechi route, Kohechi route (which links Kumano Hongu Taisha with Koyasan) and Ohechi route (which goes along the southern coastline). The Iseji route connects the Kumano region with the Ise Grand Shrines located in Mie prefecture. Finally, the Omine Okugake route connects the Kumano Hongu Taisha with the Yoshino region, located in Nara prefecture. In this way, Kumano Kodo forms a circuit of pilgrimage routes along the Kii peninsula that not only links to its own sites, but also connects with three other important sites.

While Kumano Kodo, contrary to Western pilgrimages, is not exclusively dedicated to a single religion, it is closely associated with Shugendo or asceticism, a Japanese faith closely related to mountains. Since the introduction of agriculture during the Yayoi period (300 BC – 300 AC), mountains have occupied a preeminent place in the minds of the Japanese people. They are the places where the necessary water for crops originate and the gods dwell. They are also believed to be the place where the spirits of the dead go. These spirits would become mountains gods who protect the community and bring abundance. The gods were believed to descend from the mountains during spring and live with the community as crop gods to later return to the mountains in fall. Because of these beliefs, mountains were revered as an 'other world' (Miyake, 2001). Therefore, the central place that mountains play as sacred spaces in Shugendo is by no means alien to Japanese culture in general.

The basis of the Shugendo faith is believed to antecede Buddhism's arrival (Gorai, 2008) but it has received throughout the history influences from other religions such as esoteric Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism to appear as a syncretic religious system at the end of the Heian period (794 - 1185). Shugendo still exists in contemporary Japan (Miyake, 1966; Swanson, 1981). En no Gyoja is traditionally revered as its founder and it is believed that he lived during the Nara period (710 – 794 AC), when he was mostly active in the Yoshino-Kumano region (Miyake, 1996; Swanson, 1981). The historical basis of his figure is not entirely clear, although there are records of a man named En no Ozunu who lived during the Nara period and was banished under suspicion of using his powers to mislead people (Miyake, 1996; Swanson, 1981). Among the many sacred mountains he visited, it is believed that En no Gyoja also performed the pilgrimage to Kumano (Miyake, 2001).

The main premise of Shugendo is the acquirement of supernatural powers through ascetic practices in sacred mountains and the usage of such powers for the benefit of the society (Miyake, 1966). In this sense, Shugendo puts more emphasis on worldly benefits and the present than the afterlife austerities. Rituals are undertaken inside different sacred mountains in Japan, which are believed to be spiritual worlds or Buddhist Pure Lands (Miyake, 1966) by its followers, who are called *yamabushi* ('those who dwell/deeply bow or worship the mountain') or *shugensha* ('those who accumulate power') (Swanson, 1981). Although supernatural powers should be used for the benefit of society, this does not mean that Shugendo is an open faith. On the contrary, it is an esoteric religious system, where only initiated *yamabushi* are allowed to access certain knowledge (Swanson, 1981).

Illustration 1: Map of Kumano Kodo routes, highlighting Nakahechi route

(Reproduced with permission)

Source: Kumano Tourism Bureau, http://www.tb-kumano.jp/es/kumano-kodo/nakahechi/ (2016/06/21)

The region of Kumano has been used since Nara era as a site for religious practices in the mountains, and has also been travelled by Emperors from the Heian period (Miyake, 1992; Moerman, 1997; Koyama, 2000). The first layman who did the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage was Emperor Uda in 907, and was later followed by other emperors, retired emperors and aristocrats (Miyake, 1992; Moerman, 1997). Interestingly, women were allowed to perform the pilgrimage as well, so empresses and other female members of the aristocracy travelled as well (Koyama, 2000). This was an important difference from other sacred sites such as Mount Omine or Koyasan, where women were not allowed to enter. The motivation for these pilgrimages was not entirely religious, as it also served as a way to articulate relationships between the capital and the regional powers, which were not always cordial. Maintaining peaceful relationships was particularly important, as the Kumano religious groups possessed a significant military power, including a navy, during the Heian period (Moerman, 1997). This does not mean, however, that the pilgrimage was only a political tool, as religious rituals and beliefs were present in the pilgrimage. For example, the court diviner

(onmyouji) (Moerman, 1997) determined even the moment of departure. Still, pilgrims would usually head to Kumano during summer and avoid undertaking the travel in winter, which would be hard to tolerate because of inadequate accommodations during this period (Koyama, 2000).

The travel from Kyoto to the depths of the Kii peninsula, where the three grand shrines are located, was an arduous trip even for the aristocracy. The hardship of the travel was, in fact, an integral element of the pilgrimage itself, as it was believed that undertaking such a difficult task was a meritorious deed that would reward the pilgrim with worldly benefits and help them achieve enlightenment. This characteristic reflected the rigorous austerities mountain ascetics would perform to a much higher degree during their practices in sacred mountains such as Mount Omine (Koyama, 2000). However, while the pilgrimage was certainly an arduous journey during this era, it did not mean that the aristocrats would travel with no comfort: a cohort of government officials, priests, consorts, poets and servants would follow them. During the pilgrimage, the local governments provided food, transport and accommodations as tribute to the capital government. However, providing these goods and services was a heavy burden for the local population (Moerman, 1997). Along their journey, the royal pilgrims would stop to rest and perform different rituals at the ninety-nine Oji, smaller shrines along the pilgrimage routes. Travel parties would also carry out entertainment activities such as poetry contests, dances and wrestling matches. They would also offer valuable presents from the capital, and dedicate sutra readings and prayers (Moerman, 1997).

In the Kamakura period (1185 - 1333), members of the military class from regional areas also began to participate in the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage, as the faith in the Kumano deities began to expand to their territories (Hoshino, 1981; Koyama, 2000). During the Muromachi period (1336 - 1573), the military leaders began to focus on the Ise pilgrimage, but the women undertook the journey to Kumano (Koyama, 2000). During this era, the Kumano faith continued to expand and flourished in all sectors of society, coining the term *Ari no Kumanomoude* (meaning 'the ant procession to Kumano') as an expression for the great numbers of pilgrims (Koyama, 2000). In this period, Shugendo practices in Kumano developed according to the Buddhist doctrine of the ten worlds: as a *yamabushi* performed his austerities, he would pass through ten stages to finally leave the mountains and obtain Buddhahood. Also, the Kumano and Yoshino regions became identified with Buddhist mandalas: Yoshino-Omine was identified with the Diamond Mandala, and the Kumano region, with the Womb Mandala. Buddhist ethics, such as the six virtues, were incorporated as well (Swanson, 1981; Miyake, 2001).

During the Edo period (1603 – 1868), Kumano started to lose its position as a major pilgrimage route as other pilgrimages prospered, such as Ise Grand Shrine and the Saikoku pilgrimage (Koyama, 2000). The Ise pilgrimage, which existed since the Heian period, started to gain more relevance during the 15th century to gradually replace Kumano Kodo in the 16th century. As in Kumano Kodo, pilgrims from all social positions and faiths were welcomed to visit Ise. Its decline did not mean that the Kumano pilgrimage disappeared completely, but its form did change through the Saikoku pilgrimage, in which the pilgrim would travel to 33 temples related to the bodhisattva Kannon located in the

Kansai region. The Saikoku pilgrimage started in the Seiganto-ji temple located in Nachi Grand Shrine and continued in reverse through the Nakahechi route. However, the Saikoku pilgrimage did not strictly follow the Nakahechi route and deviated from it when it reached the Kimiidera temple, located nowadays in Wakayama city (Koyama, 2000).

Finally, government policies enacted during the Meiji Period (1868 – 1912), such as the Kami and Buddha Separation Order of 1868 and the following Prohibition of Shugendo Order of 1872, also contributed to its decline. Because Shugendo was a syncretic system, *shugensha* were forced to become either Shinto or Buddhist followers, or return to lay life (Swanson, 1981; Miyake, 2001). As the appreciation for the Kumano area as a sacred place slipped into the background, a new appreciation as a place for sightseeing was formed (Amada, 2012). This new perspective, which prompted new non-religious motives for climbing mountains such as sightseeing, was not exclusive to Kumano Kodo and has to be situated in the broader context of the Meiji period, when Western ideas on outdoor recreation were introduced to Japan. Shugendo would not be restored as an independent system until the end of the Second World War (Swanson, 1981; Miyake, 2001).

2. 3. Early tourism development in Kumano Kodo

2. 3. 1. Kumano Kodo's early tourism development

In 1931, the National Park Law was enacted, initially focusing on supporting the regional economies through tourism. During the 1930s, the Kumano area suffered from population decrease and a low point in its forestry industry, so the idea to revitalize the area by tourism spread. The Kumano Kodo pilgrimage routes include not only the three main shrines of Kumano, but also many other resources that could be used to attract tourists, such as scenic beauty and hotsprings. After negotiation with the local forestry and mineral industries, the Yoshino-Kumano National Park was designated in 1936. Murakushi (2004) explains the origin of this designation in the environment's degradation that took place in the Yoshino area during the Meiji era, due to uncontrolled forestry activities. Botanist Shirai Mitsutaro (1863 - 1932), who advocated for the need to protect the area, researched this environmental situation. Shirai also took interest in Kumano area's natural and historic environment, which was affected because of the Kami and Buddha Separation Order, issued by the Meiji government. The proposal of a natural reserve in the area issued by Shirai was aimed at discouraging forestry industries by developing tourism activities such as hiking. According to Mizutani (2014), the protected area was initially thought only for the Yoshino, with the inclusion of the Kumano area being a later addition. Kumano's landscapes were included in part because of the recognition it gained through publications done by local photographers from the Meiji era to the Showa era. The inclusion of the Kumano region also added coastal areas, giving the Yoshino-Kumano National Park its distinctive landscape of both mountainous and coastal areas, in contrast to other national parks of the time, which covered only mountainous zones (Kanda, 2009). These coastal zones were seen as natural landscape that expressed the identity of a maritime nation such as Japan. Another distinctive aspect was that its historical importance was linked to its value as a spiritual place visited by Japanese emperors in the past. These elements were regarded as valuable for further touristic

development. During the Second World War, the Kumano region was also connected to nationalism, as the Japanese Emperors used to travel to the area in the past (Kanda, 2009; Kanda, 2012).

Still, during the 1950s and 1960s, the nearby beach area of Shirahama and nearby coastal areas became the main touristic spot of the Kii peninsula because of its 'exotic' tropical country-like image. However, since the 1970s, this approach felt short as domestic tourism's needs became more varied (Nakai, 2011). As a way to attract tourists in this new context, Kumano Kodo, which has been receiving few visitors since Meiji times, was selected as a potential touristic destination. From 1977 to 1983 the Historical Roads Survey Operation (*Rekishi no Michi Chousa Jigyou*) was undertaken in different historical areas of Wakayama, including the Kumano routes. Through this examination, different historical areas were designated as Historical Sites (*Shiseki*). In 1978, the Agency for Cultural Affairs started restoration works in the area located at Takijiri in Nakahechi town (nowadays, merged with Tanabe city) and Hama no Miya in Nachikatsura town, Higashimuro district. The former Ministry of Education, Science and Culture later designated this restored area in 2000 as the Historical Site of Kumano Pilgrimage Route (Shiseki Kumano Sankeimichi). Later in 2002, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) decided to incorporate in the Historical Site of Kumano Pilgrimage Route new sections of Kohechi, Ohechi, Fujita-saka, Hotoke-saka, Kumano-gawa river, as well as new areas of Nakahechi and Iseji route. Through this process, it can be observed that the Kumano region began to reemphasize its sacred mountainous areas, in contrast to previous decades of promoting its coastal areas. Its emphasis as the sacred lands where the Emperors traveled was diminished in favor of presenting Kumano as a historic place where the common people gathered to express their faith (Kanda, 2012). There was also a switch from promoting the natural aspects of the Kumano region from 1950s until 1970s, to focus on its cultural and historic characteristics since the 1980s (Terada, 2014).

2. 3. 2. The designation of Kumano Kodo as a UNESCO Heritage Site and its administration

During the 28th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, which took place in Suzhou, China, from June 28th to July 7th, 2004, properties related to Kumano Kodo were inscribed as the 'Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range' World Heritage Site (UNESCO, 2004). The bases for the designation were the following cultural criteria:

Criterion (ii): The monuments and sites that form the cultural landscape of the Kii Mountains are a unique fusion between Shintoism and Buddhism that illustrates the interchange and development of religious cultures in East Asia.

Criterion (iii): The Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples in the Kii Mountains, and their associated rituals, bear exceptional testimony to the development of Japan's religious culture over more than a thousand years.

Criterion (iv): The Kii Mountains have become the setting for the creation of unique forms of shrine

and temple buildings which have had a profound influence on the building of temples and shrines elsewhere in Japan.

Criterion (vi): Together, the sites and the forest landscape of the Kii Mountains reflect a persistent and extraordinarily well-documented tradition of sacred mountains over the past 1200 years.

The site was inscribed under the category of cultural landscape, which was created in 1992, with the World Heritage Convention becoming the first international legal instrument to recognize and protect this type of landscape (Rossler, 2006). Cultural landscapes represent the "combined works of nature and of man (…) They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal" (World Heritage Centre, 2012, pp. 14). This category was created to effectively designate sites that could not be classified as simply natural or cultural. It also facilitated the designation of sites related to traditional communities who often have close and complex relationships with their environment (Fowler, 2003). Cultural landscapes are designated based on their Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), their representativeness of a specific geo-cultural region and their capacity to illustrate the cultural elements of such regions (World Heritage Centre, 2012).

2. 4. Contemporary tourism development in Tanabe city

2. 4. 1. Contemporary inbound tourism in Japan

In order to get a better understanding of the presence of international visitors in regional areas such as Tanabe city, it is important to consider the inbound tourism development in contemporary Japan and its relationship to the Asia-Pacific region. Due to demographic, technological and economic changes in the last decades, tourism development has experienced a robust growth in Asia-Pacific, with inbound tourism having an important role in this context. As noted before, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the Global Tourism Research Center (2017), the Asia-Pacific region has become the second most visited regions after Europe, as well as the fastest growing, registering a 9% growth in 2016, which accounts for 308 million arrivals. Due to its substantial influx of international arrivals, the Asia-Pacific region received USD 367 billion in receipts in 2016, which is equal to 30% of the world total. Continued substantial advances in inbound tourism are expected in the region, projected to achieve 535 million international arrivals by 2030 and an estimated annual growth of 4-5%. Among the different countries, China leads the inbound market (59.3 million arrivals in 2016), followed by Thailand (32.6 million), Malaysia (28.9 million), Hong Kong (28.6 million) and Japan (24 million) (United Nations World Tourism Organization & Global Tourism Research Center, 2017).

In this context of massive regional development, the Japanese government has prioritized tourism development since the 2000s, particularly inbound tourism, as a way to revitalize regional economies suffering of low economic activity and ageing population, and to assist in the recovery

of areas affected by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami disaster (Prime Minister of Japan and Cabinet, 2012). Different initiatives have been taken in recent years to promote tourism development, such as the Visit Japan Campaign in 2003, the Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Law in 2007, the Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Plan in 2007 (renew in 2012) and establishment of the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA) in 2008. Because of these efforts, statistics show different improvements in inbound tourism. According to the 2017 Tourism White Paper (Japan Tourism Agency, 2017), in the 2016 fiscal year, the number of international visitors reached 24.04 million, up 21.8% from the previous year. It was the fourth consecutive record-setting year. Visitors from Asia accounted for 83.6% of all international visitors, with its main markets being China (26.5%), South Korea (21.23%), Taiwan (17.3%) and Hong Kong (7.7%). These results positioned Japan as the 16th tourism destination in terms of international arrivals worldwide, and 5th in Asia. Increase in international arrivals provided Japan with receipts amounting to 30.7 billion dollars (13th in the world and 5th in Asia) in 2016 (Japan Tourism Agency, 2017).

To summarize, it can be observed that the Japanese government has once again prioritized inbound tourism in its contemporary tourism policy after three decades of developing outbound tourism. By referring to central public documents on the subject, the reasons for this policy change are related in part to the need for revitalizing Japanese society, which has been facing socio-economic decline in recent years. Inbound tourism was in a sense considered a 'saver' that can bring economic benefits, particularly to regional communities, such as Tanabe city.

2. 4. 2. Outline of Tanabe city's contemporary tourism development

Tanabe city, in Wakayama prefecture, Kansai region, is situated on the west-central part of the Kii peninsula. The current city was formed in 2005 through a merge with four nearby towns: Hongu, Ryujin, Oto and Nakahechi. This merge transformed Tanabe in the largest city in terms of surface in all the Kansai area, a total of 1,026.91 km2. Its current landscape is composed of a coastline situated on its west side, while 88.9% of the city's surface is composed of mountain forests. As of 2016, Tanabe's population is 74,770, showing a decline from 79,119 in 2010. Along with these demographic changes, Tanabe's economy has gone through transformation in recent years. Traditional industries have shown a decline in their workforce, with farming employed 2,918 people in 2015 (down from 3,369 in 2010) and forestry, 1,508 in 2015 (down from 1,828 in 2010) (Tanabe City, 2016). In this situation, tourism is expected to play a central in community revitalization (Tanabe Commerce and Industry Council, 2009).

After the merge, Tanabe city includes important tourist resources such as 60 kilometers of pilgrimage routes comprised of the Nakahechi and the Kohechi routes, the Kumano Hongu Shrine and Oyunohara, the former location of Kumano Hongu Shrine. The area is also filled with important Onsen that have been visited for several centuries, with the most famous being Yu no Mine, located in the former Hongu town of Tanabe city. The Nakahechi route, which links the three main shrines in a circuit, is the most popular route for tourists and has its origins in the Heian period, when aristocrats from travel from the imperial capital in Kyoto. Along this route we can find numerous Oji,

small shrines dedicated to lesser protective deities and where pilgrims used to perform offerings. Hiking, regional cuisine, handcrafts and local festivals are other tourism assets that can be found.

To coordinate tourism policies effectively in the new-merged city, a local Destination Management Organization, named the Tanabe Kumano Tourism Bureau (hereafter, the Bureau), was established in April 2006. While the tourism associations of each of the merged four towns are still in function, the Bureau plays an important management role by collaborating with them in order to further develop the local tourism sector. The Bureau's organization is established as a joint public-private tourism promotion agency, and includes the five old towns' administrations as well as the present Tanabe city administration. Its working staff not only consists of locals who have worked beforehand in regional tourism but foreign staff as well, who have played a significant role in the advance of inbound tourism. The Bureau's main functions are mainly divided in two general fields: tourism promotion and grassroots tourism development. Tourism promotion consists of activities such as multilingual website and pamphlets, overseas promotions (including joint tourism promotion with Galicia, Spain), support for press and travel agents, and giving lectures and presentations. Grassroots tourism development is concerned about activities related to management and stakeholder coordination, such as a stakeholder networking, grassroots hospitality seminars for stakeholders involved in tourism, assistance to local guides, and the creation of bilingual material aimed at bus schedules and area maps. Improvements on tourism infrastructure such as information centers and signs were included as grassroots tourism development. As it can be seen, although these activities are called 'grassroots', in reality the approach is top-down because the Bureau supports the development of services and infrastructure related to the community through different activities, rather than the locals carrying out initiatives by themselves.

As part of its tourism policies, Tanabe city has also decided to increase its number of inbound Western tourists by promoting its World Heritage Sites, which at first may seem surprising considering that Japan's main sources of international visitors are Asian countries. The reason behind this was because the Bureau's authorities noticed that the nearby Buddhist complex of Koyasan, also registered in the 'Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range', was receiving an influx of French tourists who were interested in Japanese history and culture. Noticing this potential, the Bureau decided to focus on Western tourists and small groups, estimating that they would have long stays and spend more money because they would walk the Kumano pilgrimage routes, and enjoy the traditional Japanese scenery and spiritual culture. In particular FIT Western tourists were the main market that the Bureau aimed to reach (Japan Tourism Agency, n.d.; Nagatani, 2017).

2. 4. 3. Tanabe city's tourism promotion and development aimed at international visitors

The growing number of international tourists is a remarkable feature considering that the Kumano area is located comparatively far from main tourist centers such as Tokyo or Kyoto, and that transportation is limited due to its mountainous terrain. The Bureau has been also playing a key role in devising and implementing promotional campaigns and services aimed at Western tourists. In

order to increase their number, the Bureau has made it easier to travel around the area by setting English signs, restaurant menus and bus timetables. It has also conducted workshops with the local community in order to improve English conversation skills. The Bureau also provides attention to visitors in English.

An important initiative was the establishment in 2010 of a travel agency, Kumano Travel, which includes its own online reservation system where visitors can book lodging facilities, tours and other services. The reservation system is aimed particularly at small groups and individual tourists, and is mainly utilized by foreigners: in 2016, out of 11,442 tourists who used it, 7,744 were international visitors (approximately 67%), showing an increase of 49% in comparison to 2015. The adoption of this technological tool has simplified and sped up the planning and booking process for visitors, in particular international ones. At the same time, it has benefited the local establishments by processing reservations with no intermediaries and thus ensuring that earnings stay within the region, as well as creating employment. While the reservation system provides a source of funding for the Bureau, many tourists have started to choose other available booking websites, posing a problem for future funding. The Bureau recognizes that competition has increased mainly due to other online systems' relative lower costs. Therefore, it has decided to differentiate itself by diversifying its service, including luggage transport, preparation of food tailored to tourists' requests, and increasing tourist-aimed experiences such as crafting and on-site English support for different situations that the tourists may face during their hiking in the pilgrimage routes such as health problems, natural disasters or losing their way in the mountains. This way, the Bureau still retains a 70% share of tourism in Tanabe city and provides what they describe as a more organic service than international online reservation websites (Progano, 2018a). The Bureau's function as a travel agent through its reservation system is substantial for its own funding, amounting to 80% of the 2016 annual budget (which amounted to 60,000,000 yen), while the rest was funded by the Tanabe city local government. The profitability of the online reservation system ensures that the Bureau can continue to function normally and carry out its grassroots development activities in Tanabe city (Progano, 2018a).

The Bureau has also started in 2017 a service that assists international travelers who arrive to Tanabe with no reservations. Through its services based on close collaboration with stakeholders, the office has become a new source of income for the Bureau. This kind of service is considered valuable because finding accommodation and transport in rural areas such as Tanabe is not an easy task with any prior booking, particularly for international tourists who may not be familiar with both the destination and the language. It also prevents visitors from showing up unannounced at accommodation facilities and creating misunderstandings with the staff.

2. 5. Outline of tourists visiting Tanabe city

2. 5. 1. General characteristics of tourists in Tanabe city

Before discussing the characteristics of both domestic and international tourists, a general outline of tourists in Tanabe city is described. This outline is valid for all visitors and relevant for the destination.

As it was mentioned before, the current Tanabe city was formed through a merger of Tanabe with four towns. Statistics from the Wakayama Tourism Agency (2018) show that tourism growth has not been equal among the five merged towns, with clear differences:

Location	Number of visitors
Former Tanabe city	1,036,972
Former Ryujin town	655,085
Former Nakahechi town	354,206
Former Oto town	74,446
Former Hongu town	1,516,814
Total	3,637,523

Source: Heisei 29 Tourist Motivation Research Report, page 10.

As it can be noticed, there are clear differences among the merged towns. Hongu town, being the location of important tourism assets related to Kumano Kodo such as the Kumano Hongu Taisha, is the most visited town. Tanabe, being the 'door' to the Nakahechi route and being accessible by train, is also among the most visited areas. Ryujin town, while not containing important sites related to pilgrimage, is home of famous hot springs. Nakahechi contains the largest part of the Nakahechi route and thus contains related cultural and natural resources, so it could be speculated that that it derives its visitors from them. Finally, Oto is the location that receives fewer visitors due to not being connected to any of the pilgrimage routes and not having developed tourism resources.

Regarding room capacity, statistics show again differences among the five merged towns.

Location	Room capacity
Former Tanabe city	1,994
Former Ryujin town	1,276
Former Nakahechi town	422
Former Oto town	537
Former Hongu town	2,875
Total	7,104

Source: Heisei 29 Tourist Motivation Research Report, page 37.

Regarding the motivation for visiting Tanabe city, below is a resume of the main 8 travel motivations is offered. The main motivation for each area is underlined:

	Total in Tanabe city	Former Tanabe	Former Ryujin	Former Oto	Former Nakahechi	Former Hongu
Temple and shrine visit	1,336,123	238,140	989	2,600	115,000	979,394
Onsen	654,155	91,006	293,299	6,048	7,841	256,321

Landscape sightseeing	351,197	84,200	258,636	4,280	0	4,081
Sports, hiking	339,542	72,329	8,705	7,557	17,440	233,511
Tourism facilities	451,286	191,925	39, 988	18,788	200,585	0
Festivals (Matsuri)	240,632	206,790	2,197	14,700	5,000	11,945
Sea or river bathing	100,220	77,659	3,189	7,727	1,200	10,445

Source: Heisei 29 Tourist Motivation Research Report, page 23.

As it can be observed, motivations for visiting the different towns that make Tanabe are varied. However, it can be noted that temple and shrines visits compose by far the greatest general motivation for visiting Tanabe city, with onsen being in second place. Not surprisingly, Hongu town, where the Kumano Hongu Taisha is located, is also mainly visited because of its temples and shrines. Tanabe city also contains important temples and shrines such as the Toukei Jinja, making them the most prevalent travel motivation. Also, because it is the only part of Tanabe city connected to the sea, it attracts a larger number of visitors seeking bathing. Ryujin town has been traditionally famous for its onsen. Oto and Nakahechi, on the other hand, are mostly visited for their tourism facilities. Nakahechi town particularly covers most of the Nakahechi route section located in Tanabe, serving as a midway between Tanabe and Hongu. Therefore, visitors who are traveling the pilgrimage route are most likely to seek accommodation in the different communities of Nakahechi town.

Finally, one-day visitors and lodgers in Tanabe show significant differences, with the former being the largest segment.

Location	One-day visitors	Lodgers
Former Tanabe city	797,768	239,204
Former Ryujin town	604,009	51,076
Former Nakahechi town	342,265	11,941
Former Oto town	70,098	4,348
Former Hongu town	1,381,697	135,117
Total	3,195,837	441,686

Source: Heisei 29 Tourist Motivation Research Report, page 10.

When looking at the official documents (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018), it is noticeable that the prevalence of one-day tourists is not exclusive to Tanabe city. With few exceptions, popular destinations in Wakayama prefecture were generally visited by one-day tourists in 2017:

Location	Day-trippers	Lodgers
Wakayama city	5,572,276	938,691
Shirahama town	1,517,691	1,947,269
Shingu city	1,175,310	130,261
Koya town	1,209,819	209,946

Kinokawa city	1,668,895	10,642

Source: Heisei 29 Tourist Motivation Research Report, page 10.

2. 5. 2. Domestic tourists in Tanabe city

Japanese tourists make up for the majority of the visitors in Tanabe: in 2017, 307,065 out of 441,686 total visitors who stayed overnight were Japanese. The majority of them (92,847) came from Osaka prefecture, which is north to Wakayama prefecture. Next, the Kanto region, where Tokyo is located, is Tanabe's second biggest source of domestic visitors (56,073). The third major source of visitors was Wakayama prefecture itself (52,815), showing the importance of intra-prefectural travel. The fourth biggest source of visitors was the Tokai region (23,214), located between the Kansai and Kanto areas. Finally, the fifth source of tourists is Hyogo prefecture (22,815). As it can be observed, most domestic tourists come from the Kansai region, where Wakayama, Osaka and Hyogo prefectures are located. These results are similar to the data on tourists in Wakayama prefecture overall, which show that 48.3% arrive from Kansai region and 10.8% from Wakayama prefecture (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018).

2. 5. 3. International tourists in Tanabe city

As it has been mentioned before, the Bureau has aimed at increasing the number of Western visitors to Tanabe city, especially by attracting them to the Kumano Kodo's Nakahechi route. According to official data (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018), in 2017 international visitors amounted to 36,821. However, it is important to note that there are 97,800 tourists whose origin was not identified.

This initiative was paired with educational seminars aimed at local stakeholders in order to improve hospitality and services aimed at international visitors. Because of these efforts, the number of visitors to Tanabe city has been steadily increasing. The Heisei 29 Tourist Motivation Research Report indicates that in 2017 Tanabe was visited by 3,637,523 visitors. However, only 441,686 (12.1%) of them stayed the night in Tanabe. Regarding international tourists, from 441,686 lodgers in Tanabe during 2017, 36,824 (8.3%) of them were foreigners. Yet, due to not counting non-lodgers and a large number of 97,800 unidentified visitors, their number might be bigger than reported (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018). As the statistics show, the number of Japanese tourists is still the largest; however, their number has been going down slowly, while the international tourists are on a growing trend. The Bureau has mentioned that it aims to increase the number of Japanese tourists in the future (Nagatani, 2017). Currently, the Bureau's reservation system data shows that, during fiscal year 2016, the average international visitor spent 2.50 nights in Tanabe, spending an average of 24,008 yens, compared with the Japanese visitor spending 1.45 nights and 10,854 yen on average (Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau, personal interview, 2018). Therefore, while smaller in number, international tourists individually have a greater economic impact.

Analyzing the international visitors' nationality is not an easy task. Data offered by the prefectural government (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018) shows the international visitors' country of origin, but does not detail exactly which cities or towns they are visiting. Instead, it shows the overall area,

which covers a wide geographic area. Below, two of the areas that roughly include Tanabe city and their top five inbound tourism markets are shown:

- Kumano Hongu Onsenkyo: Australia and New Zealand (3,894), United States (2,584), non-specified European countries (2,049), Hong Kong (1,841) and Spain (1,837).

- Tanabe, Nakahechi, Hyakkensan and Minabe: Taiwan (17,327), Hong Kong (14,963), South Korea (8,466) and China (3,475), and Australia and New Zealand (2,945).

As it can be observed, because only broad areas were utilized to categorize the data, Tanabe appears to have a large number of Asian tourists when mingled with other nearby destinations, while Hongu area shows a large number of Western tourists. Because of the ambiguity of the data elaborated by the prefectural government, it was decided to use the information provided by the Bureau in order to obtain a better understanding of the tourists' country of origin. The data provided by the Bureau (Tanabe Kumano Tourism Bureau, 2018) showed the country of origin of international tourists who reserved their accommodation through Kumano Travel from April, 2016 to March, 2017. Data showed that a total of 5,887 international visitors and 687 Japanese visitors made their reservations during said period. Regarding international tourists, Australia was at the top, with 1,039 visitors (17.65%), followed by United States with 972 (16.51%), France with 418 (7.10%), United Kingdom with 413 (7.02%) and Spain with 393 visitors (6.68%). When comparing the Bureau's data with the official statistics by the Wakayama prefectural government, Australians are shown to be the most numerous nationality visiting Tanabe city, behind the Japanese themselves. The large numbers of Westerners visiting Tanabe city shows a contrast to the tourism statistics of Wakayama prefecture overall. As data shows (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018), Asian countries constitute the biggest market for Wakayama tourism, with Hong Kong (22.2%), China (20.5%) and Taiwan (13.6%) being at the top. On the other hand, Western markets (which countries were not specified in the official prefectural documents) amount to 26.4%. However, there are some exceptions. For example, the Buddhist complex of Koyasan, also located in Wakayama prefecture, has been successful in attracting large numbers of Western visitors as well, with France (13,437), United States (11,992) and United Kingdom (6,773) at the top (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018).

To sum, Tanabe city has been carrying out tourism development in order to revitalize its regional economy, and has made its pilgrimage-related resources the main tourism product. At the same time, it has aimed to not only attract domestic tourists, but also international visitors, particularly from Western countries, due to their bigger spending and their interest in traditional Japanese culture.

2. 6. Case study's relevance

As previously described, the Nakahechi section located in Tanabe city was selected to conduct fieldwork on the premises that it would be an adequate case study to conduct the present study. This selection has the following rationale. First, Tanabe city has been actively aiming to attract international visitors, particularly Western, as the previously described tourism development and

statistics show. The presence of large numbers of Western tourists would facilitate finding the necessary participants to interview and in consequence facilitate qualitative fieldwork in outdoor areas, which is noted to be challenging (Wall-Reinius, 2011). Secondly, pilgrimage routes and sites constitute its main tourism resource. The World Heritage Site plays a central role in attracting both domestic and international tourists to the area, and its mainly composed of registered properties related to the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage. Also, as the prefectural documents shows (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018), the main motivations of tourists for visiting Tanabe city are its different temples and shrines, which are closely associated to Kumano Kodo. Therefore, it can be expected that the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage plays a central role in Tanabe' tourism development, thus making the location suitable for conducting research on pilgrimage tourism. Thirdly, the Nakahechi route in Tanabe city (around 45 kilometers) has clearly defined pilgrimage paths, which provided a clearly delineated fieldwork site. As it can be observed in the map, the Nakahechi section located in Tanabe city is a straight line that goes mainly from the Takijiri Oji, which nowadays acts as the trailhead for the Nakahechi route to the Kumano Hongu Taisha, making detours a rare instance and encouraging visitors to follow a similar path. In consequence, selecting places where visitors would likely gather would be an easier task for the researcher. Fourthly, the selected section of Nakahechi route is a popular route among tourists because of its cultural significance, easy access and moderate challenge, with most hikers of average fitness being able to complete it two or three days (Kato & Progano, 2017).

2. 7. Conclusion

Kumano Kodo has a long and rich history as a pilgrimage site; however, its development as an international tourism destination is relatively recent and largely prompted by its UNESCO World Heritage Site designation in 2004. The registration as a WHS was the foundation on which Tanabe city, mainly through its Bureau, capitalized the opportunity for increasing visitor numbers. Tanabe city has particularly prioritized the increase of Western tourists to Kumano Kodo, leading to a sustained increase in their numbers, in order to revitalize the local communities.

Because of the presence of a steady flow of Western visitors who visit Tanabe mainly motivated by its pilgrimage sites and routes, it was deemed as a good location to conduct fieldwork. However, as it was previously stated, carrying out qualitative-based research in outdoor areas is considerably challenging for researchers. Also, the specific research methodology had to be carefully decided. What kind of methodology would be suitable for this research, which aimed for an in-depth analysis of tourists from different nationalities? In the next chapter, both the selection of research methodology and the approach to fieldwork are explained in detail.

Chapter 3: Research methods

3. 1. Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to explaining the present study's methodological approach. Firstly, means-end approach, the selected research method for this research, is discussed. There are different approaches when utilizing means-end method, such as soft and hard laddering. Hence, these different approaches are discussed before explaining the selected one for the present study, soft laddering. Next, the proceedings for fieldwork and sampling are discussed. Carrying out qualitative fieldwork in outdoor settings such as Kumano Kodo has been noted to be a challenging task due to geographical conditions. Thus, it will be explained how these challenges were solved through networking with local accommodations and knowledge of the visitors' main route.

3. 2. Methodological approach

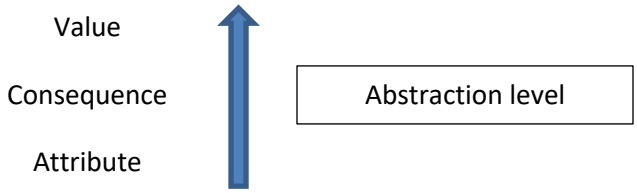
3. 2. 1. About means-end theoretical basis

Research on national segmentation has been noted to be mainly carried out through statistical techniques (Salciuviene et al., 2005; Watkins & Gnoth, 2011). However, researchers (Watkins, 2010) have questioned the validity and reliability of survey-based methodological tools for motivation and values research in cross-cultural context. This approach has been noted to only provide a list of superficial motivations, not touching deeper themes, as well as the researcher risking to list motivations that may not be the most relevant to the respondents (Jewell & Crotts, 2002). These issues are especially relevant when undertaking a cross-cultural study. How can the researcher be sure that the listed motivations will be relevant to all the studied national segments? At the same time, different nationalities may undertake travel for the same motives, but how can it been confirmed that all the visitors share the same underlying, deeper motivation for it?

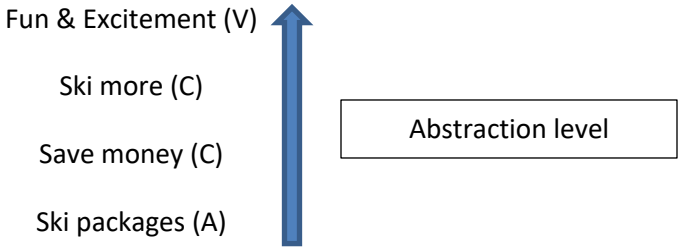
Instead, qualitative methodological approaches have been suggested for national segmentation studies (Watkins, 2010; Watkins & Gnoth, 2011). Among said approaches, researchers in national segmentation contexts (Mattila, 1999; Dibley & Baker, 2001; Watkins & Gnoth, 2011; Lin et al, 2013) have successfully utilized means-end. At the same time, means-end approach was applied in pilgrimage tourism as well (Kim, Kim & King 2016). Therefore, based on the previous literature, it was considered that means-end would prove to be an adequate methodology for achieving the objectives of the present research. This qualitative research method was developed by Gutman (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988), and theorizes that consumers make choices because the specific attributes of their chosen option can help them achieve desired values through the consequences of those choices. Therefore, the researcher aims to determine the links between attributes, consequences and values (A-C-V) to build means-end chains (MEC) (Gutman, 1997), suggesting that consumers think about product attributes in terms of personal consequences (Zanoli & Naspetti, 2002). Attributes are relatively concrete meanings that represent the physical or observable characteristics of a given product. Attributes can be abstract as well when they refer to intangible

characteristics such as style, brand or perceived value. In the middle ladder of abstraction, consequences reflect the perceived costs or benefits related to a specific attribute. As they are more abstract in nature, they are less directly perceptible in a product or brand. In the upper ladder of abstraction lie personal values, which represent beliefs or ends that the consumers seek to attain through consumption behavior (Klenosky, Gengler & Mulvey, 1993; Miles & Rowe, 2004, Veludo-de-Oliveira, Ikeda & Cortez Campomar, 2006).

The basic MEC structure can be graphically represented like this:



In a tourism-context research, the MEC structure could look like the following example taken from a study on ski destination choice utilizing means-end to understand why visitors would choose a destination over another (Klenosky et al, 1993). As it can be seen, while the basic MEC structure has only three ladders, in-field MECs can potentially have more ladders, such as two or more attributes and consequences.



To carry out means-end approaches, an interview technique called laddering is mostly utilized. Laddering specifically refers to an in-depth interview technique employed to elicit attributes-consequence-value associations that consumers (or in this research, tourists) have regarding a product or service. At a basic level, it involves asking the participant why each attribute is important to them through the simple probe of asking why (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988; Gutman, 1997; Miles & Rowe, 2004). The process continues by moving towards more abstract concepts (consequences and values) until the participant cannot respond any further. The same procedure is carried out for each elicited attribute. There are two ways of conducting laddering interviews, named soft and hard (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al, 2006). Soft laddering, sometimes called traditional laddering (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al, 2006), relies on the participants' own conversation flow with little constrains. After the interviews are conducted, there are transcribed and then subjected to content analysis in order to identify the different A-C-V of each participant and breaking down all responses into individual summary codes (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Therefore, the MECs being constructed by the researcher afterwards, thus requiring greater interpretation. However, soft laddering is considered to offer richer descriptions if the participants are more familiar with the subject (Miles & Rowe,

2004). On the other hand, hard laddering is often described as being more time effective and easier to conduct (Zanoli & Naspetti, 2002; Veludo-de-Oliveira et al, 2006). Here, the participant is forced to produce MECs one by one, and thus the obtained data does not require content analysis as in soft laddering (Miles & Rowe, 2004). Hard laddering often relies on structured questionnaires that can be administered by paper-and-pencil and computerized methods (Zanoli & Naspetti, 2002; Rusell et al, 2004; Kim et al, 2016), which both noted to produce similar results (Rusell et al, 2004).

After the laddering interviews are completed, the following steps are to conduct content analysis on them in order to identify their A-C-V, build the implication matrix and finally a Hierarchal Value Map (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). However, if hard laddering or paper-and-pencil laddering has been utilized, there is no need to conduct content analysis, as the obtained data will be already in chunks of responses that the researcher can readily analyze. From the data obtained from all the participants, an aggregate implication matrix is constructed. The matrix represents the linkages between concepts (the A-C-V) identified in the laddering interviews (Miles & Rowe, 2004). These linkages are represented in a square table in which rows and columns represent the content codes, which are intended to be included in the hierarchal value map (HVM) (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). The entries in the cells show the number of times each content code leads to other codes across all the interviewees. In an aggregate implication matrix, both direct and indirect relations are represented (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988; Miles & Rowe, 2004). Direct relations are those in which a certain content code leads directly to another. Indirect relations are those in which one content code leads to another with one or more content codes in between.

The following step is the construction of the HVM, based on the data from the aggregate implication matrix. However, in order to determine which connections will be represented in the HVM, a cut-off value must be established (Gengler & Reynolds, 1995; Miles & Rowe, 2004). After this, the next step construction of the HVM, which traditionally employ a graphical representation akin to tree-like network, as suggested by Reynolds and Gutman (1988). In this format, attributes are represented at the bottom, consequences in the middle and values at the top. These concepts are linked through connections that represent personal meanings and are the key to understanding and using a HVM (Gengler & Reynolds, 1995). However, there are alternative formats such the one suggested by Gengler, Klenosky and Mulvey (1995). This alternative format, which is referred as centralized format in this research, reduces the clutter caused by crossing lines in the map through arranging the A-C-V in a different way. Here, by placing the values at the center of the HMV, the consequences can be positioned above or below the values, and the attributes both above or below the consequences. The centralized format doubles the space available for organizing less abstracts concepts and drawing associations, while at the same time retaining the hierarchy of meaning among the different concepts. By applying different shades to the A-C-V to depict their level of abstraction, this format facilities the understanding of the hierarchal organization through visual cues. This alternative format uses graphical symbols to convey information by varying the size of the nodes. Therefore, the reader can easily understand the frequency a concept was mentioned, thus simplifying evaluation and comparisons.

Finally, criticisms towards laddering should be addressed. The technique, especially soft laddering, has been noted to be time-consuming to conduct, which may affect the interviewee's willingness to participate in it (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al, 2006). Due to the structure of the interview technique, laddering can potentially lead to artificial set of answers when the respondents find difficulties in going to higher abstractions levels during their answers, giving responses to meet only the expectations of the researcher (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al, 2006). It has been noted that, as the interview moves upwards in abstraction levels, the laddering begins to touch the interviewee's more personal issues, which can lead to the respondent to stop answering or try to talk around the issue. The interviewee may also stop responding due to sincerely 'do not know what to answer' because of a lack of previous thinking about the discussed issues (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). The researcher also risks of interfering with the laddering process. For example, the content analysis process where attributes, consequences and values are separated from the raw interview data was noted to be a delicate procedure, where the researcher's ability to conduct it successfully is vital. The methodology is also considered to be time-consuming and tedious (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al, 2006). Questions on sensitive subjects may also elicit superficial or plainly artificial responses (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Some solutions have been offered to overcome these difficulties. For example, when dealing with time-consuming interviews, it is important to describe briefly the general laddering procedure and not force participants. Creating a sense of involvement and caring also facilitates the laddering process (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988; Veludo-de-Oliveira et al, 2006).

3. 3. Application of means-end in this research

For the present study, soft laddering was considered to be the most appropriate approach. This decision was based on the consideration that soft laddering provides more freedom of expression (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al, 2006), and in consequence, richer data. Recorded interviews were transcribed into digital files and analyzed through the six-step thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), which has been noted to be useful for tourism studies (Walters, 2016). The methodology consists of the following six stages:

- Familiarization with data: during the initial phase, the researcher should first get familiarized with the data that will be analyzed. In this regard, transcription of the data to be analyzed is an important tool for this. In the current research, the interviews were transcribed verbatim into digital files, thus facilitation familiarization with its contents.

- Generating initial codes: once the researcher has a deeper understanding of the data, a list of initial codes should be produced. In the case of means-end, the codes are already established as attributes, consequences and values.

- Searching for themes: once the researcher has a large set of codes, the next phase focuses on finding over-arching themes across the codes. In this research, this involved encompassing the different codes into common attributes, consequences and values.

- Refining themes: during this phase, some of the initial themes may be noticed to not be supported from actual data or may be merge with other themes, while others may be separated into distinctive themes.

- Defining and naming themes.

- Producing the report: the final phase consists of writing the finished report. Because this research utilizes means-end theory, the construction of the aggregate implication matrixes and HVMs was carried out instead.

In order to facilitate the management and analysis of the raw data obtained from the interviews, the assistance of Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QACDAS) was utilized. Finally, the centralized HVM format was utilized to graphically present the research's findings as it is visually easier to interpret than its traditional counterpart.

Illustration 2: Mountain view from the Takahara community (photograph taken by the researcher).

3. 4. Sampled countries and approach to fieldwork

3. 4. 1. Selected countries and sampling method

For this research, visitors from Australia and Japan were selected to be sampled based on the following reasons. Firstly, it would cover both domestic and international visitors, and thus be in line with the research objective. Secondly, because they are most numerous nationalities, they will be easier to locate, facilitating fieldwork. Thirdly, because of their numbers, a study on them would be an important practical contribution for the local DMO. Fourthly, the researcher himself is proficient in both English and Japanese. This would allow the interviews to be conducted in the participants' native language, which is of importance to help them express themselves freely (Dibley & Baker, 2001). Given the objective of this research, purposive sampling approach was utilized: in order to be eligible for the interview, participants had to be of one of the two selected nationalities and at least 18 years old. Because the research aims to obtain in-depth data, soft interviews were selected as this approach fitted closely the objectives of this research: it would let participants speak more widely about their ideas and offer richer descriptions (Miles & Rowe, 2004).

It was also decided to ask the participants to fill a simple questionnaire on their socio-demographic data before proceeding with the laddering interviews. In order to standardize the education level classifications, it was decided to follow the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED 2011) utilized by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics to report cross-national education statistics. The ISCED 2011 contains eight levels of education. However, for this research, level 0 was not considered relevant to be included. Also, Master and Doctoral levels were combined in the 'post-graduate' level to simplify the questionnaire as the distinction between the two levels was not considered relevant.

Level	Description
0	Early childhood education
1	Primary education
2	Lower secondary education
3	Upper secondary education
4	Post-secondary non-tertiary education
5	Short-cycle tertiary education
6	Bachelor's or equivalent
7	Master's or equivalent
8	Doctoral or equivalent

Source: International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012).

3. 4. 2. Approach to fieldwork

As the laddering interviews would take place in a mountainous pilgrimage route, the question of when and where they could be conducted was of great importance. While the Nakahechi route's selected segment is not particularly long when compared to the pilgrimage routes such as Santiago de Compostela, it did present a number of challenges for the interviewing process. Given that fieldwork would take place in mountainous terrain, approaching visitors informally during their hiking to interview them was considered to be impractical due to the forest being inadequate for

conducting in-depth recorded interviews. Visitors might as well refuse to participate as they have to be suddenly interrupted during their travel schedule, or may be too tired or busy to participate. Finally, the pilgrimage routes, while defined, are too long for a single researcher to cover in a reasonable amount of time. Similar difficulties in conducting qualitative research outdoors settings were noted in previous research (Wall-Reinius, 2011). To deal with these challenges, a number of alternative interview venues were considered. At first, it was considered to approach visitors at tourist information spots or bus stops, as they are places were stationary tourists would to be found. However, it was dubious whether the tourists would accept to be interviewed as they might be waiting for transport or gathering travel information. Interviews were also at risk of being suddenly interrupted by visitors' time constrains. Finally, these places may not always provide a quiet place to record interviews. Therefore, interviewing tourists in lodging facilities was considered to be an optimal option, as these facilities would provide a quiet space to conduct and record interviews where visitors were likely to spend time at the same place and not be engaged in other travel-related activities.

However, in order to proceed, the researcher needed to gain access to the lodging facilities. Considering the lack of fast transportation, going back and forth to the fieldwork location was considered to be too time-consuming and financially demanding. Staying as a guest would require financial means that were not available. Also, fieldwork might obstruct the work of the lodging facilities' employees, leading to potential conflict. In order to overcome these difficulties, it was decided that the researcher could stay in the lodging facilities as a temporary worker. Similar approaches were previously used by researchers to conduct qualitative fieldwork in Japanese lodging facilities (McMorran, 2011). This way, the researcher could stay the necessary amount of time at the lodging facility to conduct research. The selected accommodation is located in the Takahara community, former Nakahechi town. Takahara is a very small community and a popular spot for visitors to spend the night after hiking for approximately 2 hours from Takijiri Oji, where the journey to Kumano Hongu Taisha begins. The chosen accommodation itself in particular is known for its hospitality and breath-taking views of the mountains and valleys. In certain weather conditions, the valleys below are filled with mist, creating a 'sea of clouds' (*unkai*). This natural phenomenon originated Takahara's nickname, the Mist Village (*Kiri no Sato*).

Australian and Japanese visitors were approached at different times of the day, who briefly explained the research aim and asked them if they could be interviewed. Participants who accepted to be interviewed were first asked to read an interview protocol, which further detailed the interview general aim, in order to obtain their informed consent before starting to record. After this, the interviewees were asked to complete a small self-administered survey on their socio-demographic data. Finally, laddering interviews were conducted. As previous qualitative national segmentation research point out, the language used by the participants is critical (Dibley & Baker, 2001). Therefore, all the interviews were carried out in the interviewees' native language, English or Japanese, in order to let them voice their thoughts utilizing their own words and expressions. As

mentioned before, the researcher himself is also fluent in both languages. The interviews were fully recorded and notes were taken during the interviews as well.

The laddering technique commonly starts with distinctions made by the participant between different products or brands. This can be done through three specific techniques: triadic sorting, preference-consumption differences and differences by occasion (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). However, given that this research is solely focused on the Nakahechi route, only attributes related to this specific destination were considered relevant. Therefore, at the beginning of the interview each participant was asked to elicit up to three attributes about Kumano Kodo's Nakahechi route that were relevant for them. The selection of three attributes was based taking into consideration interview fatigue, travel fatigue and participants' time constrains. The interviews were mostly done during night after dinner, when both the guests had enough spare time to conduct them.

After elicitation, the researcher took the first attribute mentioned and started the laddering process by asking why said attribute was important to them in order to elicit consequences and values. This probing process continued until the participant reached the third level of values (Grunert et al, 2001) or could not answer any further. Then, the researcher moved to the next attribute until all the elicited attributes were probed.

Data collection ended when data saturation was reached; in other words, when no newer information could be obtained and further coding was no longer possible (Fush & Ness, 2015). In regards to the number of interviewees needed to reach saturation, it has been pointed out that in previous research that aim to establish comparisons among different groups on a certain dimension, that selecting 12 participants per group is a viable option to reach data saturation. Other researchers have suggested at minimum 20 interviews per subgroup (Blake, Saaka & Sidon, 2004). Because there is no universal rule that can be applied to all studies and the researcher should consider other variables in its research, such as data quality (Guest et al, 2006). For this research, 25 interviews were conducted for each sampled country, leading to a total of 50 interviews. The fieldwork was carried out during August 2017, November 2017 and March 2018, therefore covering a wide range of seasons. Winter was not included as it is the low tourism season and fewer tourists would be available for interviewing.

3. 5. Conclusion

This chapter has centered on explaining in detail the chosen research methodology for the present study, means-end through soft laddering. A means-end approach was considered to be an adequate methodology since it provided in-depth data based on its three ladders of attributes, consequences and values, as well as being a framework that has been already tested in national segmentation studies before. However, conducting qualitative studies proved to be difficult in mountain areas such as Kumano Kodo. Therefore, a creative way had to be thought out to provide both a feasible way to conduct research and not compromising the research's quality. The choice of conducting research while working as volunteer staff at a popular guesthouse in one of the main points of the

Nakahechi trail proved to be an appropriate approach to fieldwork, although the laddering interview was reduced to up to three attributes in order to avoid fatigue from the participants.

Chapter 4: Literature review

4. 1. Introduction

This chapter firstly presents the research background of this study. Its purpose is to provide an academic review on the field of pilgrimage tourism, making emphasis on its relationship to the diversification of spirituality in contemporary society**.** It starts with an introduction to the concept of pilgrimage, as well as its distinctive characteristics in Japan. The different categorizations of pilgrimage are also reviewed. Following, a discussion on how pilgrimage is practiced and understood in contemporary society is presented, starting with an analysis on the new role of religion in contemporary times and the 'privatization of religion' (Okamoto, 2015). Based on this, its implications for the contemporary significance of pilgrimage are presented. Taking these discussions as background, significance of pilgrimage in tourism is discussed, presenting a review of academic research in five areas of pilgrimage, religious or spiritual tourism. The role of pilgrimage in Japanese tourism, as well as the influence of contemporary spirituality, is also presented.

This is followed by a review on academic studies on visitor segmentation by country of origin is presented in order to demonstrate its relevance and applicability in tourism studies. Finally, based on the previous research background, the main points from it, as well as the main research gaps found, are presented. On these basis, the present research's objective, and its expected academic and practical implications, are presented.

4. 2. Introduction to pilgrimage

4. 2. 1. The concept of pilgrimage

Scholars have attempted to deepen the understanding of such a complex phenomenon as pilgrimage by offering different analysis and classifications. However, there is no universal valid definition of pilgrimage (Stoddard, 1997). In consequence, the definition of what constitutes a pilgrimage and its characteristics has been a long debated issue. Some definitions have emphasized its religious element. Hoshino (1981) defines pilgrimage as a religious behavior in which a person momentary leaves their daily life to travel to a religious place, come in contact with the sacredness that is present there and finally return to their daily life. Reader and Swanson (1997) propose a twofold definition of 'pilgrimage', as a "a process and practice whereby people (pilgrims) make special journeys to or through sacred locations and engage in acts of worship", and as "an institution that includes and is composed of all the various component parts and elements that surround the process" (Reader & Swanson, 1997, 228). Stoddard (1997) discusses some of the definitions proposed by scholars and analyzes four common elements found in them: distance of movement, motivation, destination and magnitude. By analyzing the uses of these four basic elements and the challenges that they present, he proposes the definition of pilgrimage as an event consisting of longer than local journeys by numerous persons to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion.

Shackley (2001) classifies sacred sites in eleven categories. She notes that these categories should not be taken as clearly separated from each other, but they may overlap, and a single site could even fit in multiple categories. Category 10, the pilgrimage foci, are refers to a center that become the endpoint of a pilgrimage. Shackley also takes into account secular pilgrimage sites, which are regarded by visitors as sacred not because of their inclusion in religious traditions, but because of they represent a certain belief, moral or value system. However, Shackley deals with sacred sites exclusively and does not include the pilgrimage routes themselves in the study.

Turner and Turner (1978) studied pilgrimage in Christianity and argue that pilgrimage contains an initiatory quality to it, akin to ritual of passage, an important category of ritual first named by Arnold van Gennep in 1908. Here, several different characteristics are identified. Rites of passage have an element of liminality in them, which refers to the state and process of mid-transition that appears in this type of rites. However, rather than being liminal, pilgrimages should be thought as being liminoid or quasi-liminal, which describe elements in modern leisure that resemble liminality. In this regard, pilgrimage is described as a liminoid phenomenon in the sense that, like rites of passage, has a release from mundane structure, homogenization of status, simplicity of dress and behavior, communitas. But because is voluntary, and not an obligatory social mechanism like rites of passage, it is considered liminoid. While the decision to undertake a pilgrimage is individual, it brings the pilgrims to a fellowship of like-minded individuals, during their journey and at the destination. Liminoid experiences also offer pilgrims the opportunity of liberation from profane social structure that are also linked to specific religious systems. During early times, pilgrimage had some initiatory and liminal elements. But in our present age, pilgrimage does not serve to maintain society's status quo, but as an alternative mode of social being where communitas is the core, rather than social structures. Communitas is "a relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determinate identities, which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups, situations and circumstances (…) The bounds of communitas are undifferentiated, egalitarian, direct, extant, nonrational, existential (…) It does not merge identities; it liberates them from conformity to general norms, though this is necessarily a transient condition if society is to continue to operate in an orderly fashion" (Turner & Turner, 1978, 250). It also defined as a 'social antistructure'.

Other authors question the communitas aspect in pilgrimage, arguing that in fact social distinctions are reinforced. This is mainly because pilgrimage is not an egalitarian practice, as it contains power relationships, pilgrim hierarchies and competing discourses (Eade & Sallnow in Sepp, 2014). Eade (1992), in his study of the Roman Catholic shrine of Lourdes, points out that the communitas aspect was found to be limited. Voluntary work at the shrine was characterized as being highly hierarchical, and the different volunteer groups utilized distinctive clothes to individualize themselves. The pilgrimage groups themselves were noticed to possess a complex hierarchy established on national, diocesan, parish and voluntary differences. Sepp (2014), in her fieldwork carried out in Glastonbury, England, and Santiago de Compostela, Spain, discusses the existence of competing discourses inside the pilgrimage, which leads pilgrims to point out others as 'not true pilgrims'. In Santiago de Compostela, the destination of the pilgrimage, the Camino, the Catholic Church authorities only

handle out a 'compostela' to pilgrims who fulfill certain requirements. A number of pilgrims also question the authority of the Catholic Church over the Camino. Reader (2014) mentions that pilgrims may feel entitled to special treatment because of their special status as such. Moerman (1997), in his description of the Kumano pilgrimage undertaken by Japanese emperors from 1090 to 1200 CE, points out that the pilgrimages were not taken solely for devotional reasons, but also for maintaining relationships between court and regional elites. These aristocratic pilgrimages also supposed a great toll on the local population, as harsh levies were imposed on farmers to fund the pilgrimages. Provincial governors provided the Imperial party with temporary accommodation, either commandeered or constructed by conscripted labor. In this way, Kumano pilgrimages were a way to display social status and political power, demarking social hierarchies. Kosansky (2002) also shows the competitions and hierarchies that exist among pilgrims in his study of Moroccan Jewish pilgrimage. He noticed that Jewish pilgrims, when engaging in ritual relationships of charitable exchange, build hierarchies based on wealth, where the richest pilgrims compete for honor and sacred capital.

Collins-Kreiner (2010) adopts a different standpoint by approaching the pilgrimage phenomenon from a geographical point of view. In this regard, she defines 'pilgrimage' as a form of circulation, a type of population mobility. Circulation includes large-scale movements of people, objects, capital and information throughout the world, as well as more local processes of transportation, movement through public space and travel for material necessities of everyday life. These types of circulation have effects on the environment, as well as the potential to create other population mobilities such as trade, cultural exchanges, political integration and epidemics. She postulates as well that the assumption that religious elements lie at the core of the pilgrimage phenomenon is an 'old paradigm' that has resulted in discrepancies.

4. 2. 2. Concept of Japanese pilgrimage

Stoddard states that "converting the concept of pilgrimage into an operational definition that will apply equally well to all cultural settings is difficult. This is partly because of differences in linguistic usage" (Stoddard, 1997, 49). Thus, it is necessary to discuss the definition of pilgrimage in Japanese language to achieve a better understanding of the concept. As Reader and Swanson (1997) note, multiple words can be translated as 'pilgrimage' in Japanese language. Some of these words overlap and can be used interchangeably, but other terms are mutually exclusive. They list the following terms:

- *Junrei* (巡礼): it refers to visiting multiple religious sites that are linked together in a circuit. During the Heian period, it implied ascetic practices and visiting miraculous sites, but the term is no longer limited to this use nowadays. It is widely used when referring to specific pilgrimage routes.

- *Junpai* (巡拝/順拝): less common than *junrei*, but with the same implications.

- *Henro* (遍路): while it refers to a circuitous route, it is specifically used when referring to the Shikoku Henro pilgrimage in Shikoku island. It refers to the pilgrims themselves as well.
- *Henreki* (遍歴) and *junreki* (巡歴): they have a similar meaning to *henro* and *junrei*. Not widely used.
- *Junro* (順路): refers to a pilgrimage route. Not widely used.
- *Meguri* (巡り/稼り): literally meaning to 'go around', it refers to a pilgrimage to a number of shrines and temples. It is most used when the sites of a pilgrimage route are not dedicated to the same divinity, but a group of them that are related in some way.
- *Moude* (詣): it denotes a visit to worship at a shrine of temple. It may be added as a suffix to the names of sacred sites or areas to indicate a special journey of worship.
- *Mairi* (参り): it signifies the process and practice of making special visits to a sacred place that is not part of one's everyday life. It is also widely used to refer to the pilgrimage to Ise.
- *Sankei* (参詣): indicates the process of visiting sacred sites and making pilgrimages. It is not used to refer to a specific pilgrimage.
- *Sanguu* (参宮): it refers exclusively to pilgrimage to Ise shrines.
- *Sanpai* (参拝): denotes a more ordinary visit to a local shrine, as well as the act of worship itself.
- *Yuugyou* (遊行): refers to pilgrimage or religious itinerancy. It is commonly related to ascetic practices and religious itinerants such as the *hijiri* (聖).

Other associate terms listed in Reader and Swanson (1997) are also important: *Reijou* (霊場) indicates a place where spirits gather, while *reijou* located in the mountains are called *reizan* (霊山). Another term related to *reijou* is *utsushi*, which refers to 'copied pilgrimages'. This phenomenon is commonly found in Japan and consists of replicating major pilgrimage routes in smaller localized sites. One prominent example is the replication of the Shikoku Henro pilgrimage route in Sado Island, Niigata prefecture. Pilgrimage replication is, however, not exclusive to Japan and can be observed in other religions such as Christianity (Reader, 2014). Finally, there are pilgrimage-related terms that are mostly used in the context of mountains. For example, *mineiri* (峰入) refers to specific mountains retreats and is used in relation to Shugendo. As it was explained in Chapter 2, there is a close relationship between asceticism and pilgrimage in Japan, since some of the routes such as Shikoku Henro or Kumano Kodo were originally places for ascetic practices and not popular sites that attracted a large number of worshippers.

When discussing Japanese pilgrimage, it should be noted that pilgrimages can not only be based on a single site as is common in the West, but also in multiple sites that are linked together (Kadota,

2013). Although not exclusive to Japan, it represents one main characteristic of Japanese pilgrimages: a tendency to link multiple sacred sites in a numerical structured route. These multiple-site routes do not have a single 'center', but instead, encompass a determined geographical area where the sites that should be visited are located. Another characteristic is that there is a greater scope in performance of their itineraries in the sense that there is not a single route that must be traversed. Instead, pilgrims have the choice of visiting the sites at their own convenience. Also, pilgrims have the option to complete the pilgrimage in a number of journeys over a period of time, since the focus is on visiting all the sites. This pattern can be seen in the Shikoku Henro.

4. 2. 3. Classification of pilgrimage sites

Classification of pilgrimage sites is a subject that has been analyzed from different perspectives, leading to a variety of classification methods.

Turner and Turner (1978) identify four types of pilgrimages, two of them being exclusive to Christianity. The first type, called prototypical, is a pilgrimage grounded on the figure of the founder of a specific religion, his first disciples or important evangelist of his faith. The second type, Stoddard (1997) analyzes different factors that can be applied as criteria when classifying pilgrimage sites: length of journey, pilgrimage route type, frequency, location of pilgrimage destination, importance, motivation and characteristics of pilgrims. By studying the difficulties and reliability of these factors, he classifies them as 'high priority' and 'low priority'. Because they can be effectively measured and their conceptual importance, length of journey, frequency and pilgrimage route type are 'high priority' criteria; on the other hand, location of pilgrimage destination, importance, motivation and characteristic of pilgrims are 'low priority' criteria. However, 'low priority' criteria can still be useful to incorporate if greater specificity is desired.

Classifications based on constructivist premises categorize pilgrimage sites according to their current social meaning. Yamanaka (2012) argues that sacredness and sacred sites should not be thought as unchangeable concepts. Rather, sacred sites are deliberately constructed and are subject to change through human gaze. While for faithful followers their religion sites are not subject to change and modifications, if we look at their history, sacred sites have gone through multiple modifications. Based on these arguments, Yamanaka has developed a classification system named 'Modern Sacred Sites Dynamic Pattern', based on pilgrims' gaze around two axes of 'religious site – non-religious site' and 'faith/consolation of the deceased/honoring – tourism/cultural heritage'. This system allows for a dynamic classification of religious sites in four categories, and takes into account today's broad definition of pilgrimage by including non-religious sites (Yamanaka, 2012). This broad type of categorization, that includes secular sites, is based on a 'functional definition' of religion. Yamanaka (2012) explains that, while there are a great number of definitions of religion, they can be divided into two categories. The first one, called 'essential definition' (*jittaiteki teigi*) refers to religion as the beliefs and practices towards a supernatural, super-experiential existence. In contrast, the 'functional definition' (*kinouteki teigi*) defines religion on its functional over society. Here, religion is thought as what accomplishes the function of providing humans with an ultimate

meaning in life or to manage the great dilemmas related to existence, such as life and death. In this way, atheism, nationalism or even tourism can be seen as religion if they provide the person who believes or practices it with ultimate meaning in life. This makes the definition of religion itself not as clear-cut as the one found in the essential definition, while at the same time allowing the inclusion of sites not related to religious institutions.

Regarding the classification of Japanese pilgrimages, Swanson and Reader (1997) describe two types: *honzon junrei* which refers to pilgrimage that has multiple sites but a single object of worship; and *seiseki junrei*, which denotes routes associated with a charismatic figure who is not the main object of worship but provides a linking focus to the multiple sites. Kitagawa (Kitagawa in Swanson & Reader, 1997) also mentions three types of mountain pilgrimage in Japan: pilgrimages to sacred mountains, pilgrimages based on faith of a single divinity, which is worshipped among multiple linked places, and pilgrimages based on visits to multiple sites associated with holy figures. However, these classifications do not take into account multiple site pilgrimages that link various objects of worship, such as Kumano Kodo, where each of the three main sites is associated with a different kami (deity or god) and Buddha. Koyama (2000) suggests a classification based on the movement performed during the pilgrimage. In the first type, round-trip form (*oufuku kei*), the pilgrim would reach its destination and later go back through the same route he previously travelled. In the second type, excursion form (*kaiyuu kei*), after reaching his destination, the pilgrim would not go back and instead visit other sacred sites to return home afterwards.

In sum, pilgrimage has different acceptations among academics. In addition, Japanese pilgrimage also contains particular characteristics that differentiate it from its Western counterparts. While the research objective is not the elucidation of the concept of pilgrimage itself, in order to make the definition as comprehensive as possible, the present study follows the definition provided by Collins-Kreiner (2010), which defines pilgrimage from a geographic point of view as a form of circulation.

4. 3. The practice of pilgrimage in contemporary society

4. 3. 1. Contemporary society´s secularism and the new role of religion

Before starting the following discussion, a brief definition on the terms spirituality and religion is described in order to clarify its usage in the present research. According to Zinnbauer et al (1997), spirituality was historically not distinguished from religion until the advent of secularism in the 20th century, which included a general disillusionment with traditional religious institutions, as they were seen as obstacles towards experiences of the sacred. In consequence, in the last decades of the 20th century, the interest on spirituality increased and thus acquired distinct meanings and connotations. Since this change, religion can be understood as a defined and established religious system of doctrines and rituals, while spirituality refers to personal phenomenon associated to feelings of transcendence, extra sensorial perception or meaning of life (Zinnbauer et al, 1997; Ito, 2003).

Modern narratives of secularization have often predicted the disappearance or at least the marginalization of religions under the development of modern scientific knowledge and rationalization (Hanegraaff, 2000; Houtman & Manscini, 2002; Heelas, 2006). Even though there has been an increase of secularization (Houtman & Manscini 2002), religion is still certainly alive. However, the way spirituality is understood and practiced has experienced radical changes in contemporary times (Zinnbauer et al, 1997; Hanegraaff, 2000; Houtman & Manscini, 2002; Ito, 2003; Heelas, 2006; Okamoto, 2015). At the same time, rapid modernization and technological development has led to a fast-paced lifestyle where few people have time or place to relax, expand their interests, and develop their physical and mental health (Timothy & Conover, 2006).

One of the most prominent characteristics of modern spirituality is the indifference to institutional religious authorities on matters that were traditionally under their guidance, such as spiritual life or morals. Ito (2003) points that, in contemporary society, affinity with traditional religion may tend to be disregarded, while the number of people interested in spirituality has continue to experience growth. In a similar note, Okamoto (2015) comments that, having religion seen their influence reduced in the public spheres of society, the interpretation of the world and values has diversified. At the same time, religion has been confined into the private sphere of human life. Such situation has been named by Okamoto as 'privatization of religion' (*shuukyou no shijika*) (Okamoto, 2015, 16), which has had two consequences. The first one is religion´s shift in its social position, going from a public sphere to a private sphere of the individual. The second one is the 'customization' of religion, in the sense that the individual is now free to accept or reject certain aspects of its own religion, as well as combine elements of different religions in its own private faith.

Heelas (2006) argues that religion and alternative spirituality have been experiencing growth in the West, while theistic beliefs are becoming less popular among the general population. Both decline and growth are associated with larger sociocultural developments. For example, the process of pluralization has contributed to the growth of a humanistic, inner spirituality; at the same time, the increased awareness of different religions has contributed to the loss of faith, as it has become problematic to view a single religion as the sole holder of truth. The development of the autonomous self can be seen in a similar light. While it has favored "forms of spirituality which resource one's subjectivities and treats them as a fundamental sources of significance" (Heelas, 2006, 57), it has also waned the popularity of religions that do not.

This 'privatization' of spirituality has led to the expansion of alternative spiritualties. Perhaps the most prominent one is the New Age movement, a counter-culture that developed during the 1970s in the United States in response to dissatisfaction with modern Western lifestyle and social uncertainties, along with criticism towards institutionalized Christianity and overemphasized rationalism (Timothy & Conover, 2006; Hanegraaff, 2000; Houtman & Manscini, 2002). As the movement lacks unified ecclesial organization or authoritative dogmas, individualistic quests of self-discovery and spiritual growth are often emphasized along with eclectic practices (Timothy and Conover, 2006). Some of the common themes that can be found in the New Age movement are self-discovery and transformation, neo-paganism, yoga, astrology, tarot cards, Ouija boards, shamanism,

energies contained inside the body, acupuncture, crystals, power spots, Tai Chi, positive thinking, holistic or alternative medicine, vegetarian or organic food, among others (Timothy & Conover, 2006). It has also given spiritual twists to quantum physic theories, sociology and psychology (Hanegraaff, 2000). Since its origin in the United States, New Age spirituality has expanded to different parts of the world such as Europe, Australia and Japan. Since the movement sees the Earth as containing many power spots and energy sites that facilitate the transformation of individual consciousness (Attix, 2015), its spirituality is very place-oriented, making it a growing tourism market (Timothy & Conover, 2006; Attix, 2015). Nowadays, New Age's expansion has transformed it from a marginal counter-culture to a movement whose ideas has become mainstream, appealing to many people of different social levels (Hanegraaff, 2000). In the end, it can be said that "New Age spiritualties (…) are not rooted in any existing religion. They are based upon the individual manipulation of religious *as well as* non-religious symbolic systems, and this manipulation is undertaken in order to fill these symbols with new religious meaning" (Hanegraaff, 2000, p. 304).

In Japan, the movement is known as Spirit World (*Seishin Sekai*), which began to appear in the early 1980s. In contrast to its development in the West, its arrival did not involve the social critic elements, becoming more consumption-oriented, but still lacking unified organizations or teachings. Media plays a central role on the expansion of the Spirit World movement, a phenomenon that has also been observed by researchers in other contexts (Pravdova & Radosinska, 2013). For example, some "spiritual counselors" in television programs such as Hiroyuki Ehara, a self-proclaimed spiritual counsellor (Ito, 2003; Horie, 2009; Kotera, 2011), popularized the word 'spiritual' instead of the corresponding native word 'rei'. The relationship between spirituality and media in Japan goes back to the 1910s with its presence in newspapers and radio, but was deepened by the introduction of spirituality-related content in television during the 1970s. However, the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin attack, perpetrated by the cult Aum Shinrikyo motivated a reduction of these television contents until the 2000s, where spirituality-related themes were presented in a lighter, non-affirmative entertainment format or for life improvement. This was done in order to take distance from any negative associations related to dangerous cults or the advent of a New Age (Horie, 2009; Kotera, 2011). In this context the word *supirichuaritei* (spirituality) gained much popularity over the native '*rei*' as it avoided negative connotations of spirits and religions. Also, because the word has a foreign origin, it perceived as more advanced and fashionable (Horie, 2009). At the same, these contemporary spirituality-related elements coexist with a secularization process in Japanese society, which continues since the Second World War (Reader, 2012). However, others point out that secularized East Asian societies, including Japan, still show high levels of spirituality while not publicly acknowledging any affiliation to specific religions (Reed, 2007).

In sum, it can be said that spirituality and religiousness have not entirely declined in the contemporary era, contradicting secularization thesis that predicted the disappearance of religion under the rise of science and rationalization. However, the way spirituality is practiced in the contemporary world has experienced radical changes. Traditional religious institutions, particular theistic ones, have seen their influence diminish, as individuals increasingly disregard their final

authority on spiritual life. As a result, spirituality has been 'deregulated' from religious institutions, and individuals have obtained freedom of choice in defining their own spiritual life. As spirituality is now a matter of personal choice, the individual is also free to practice different spiritual traditions as they see fit, no longer under dogmatic restrictions from 'external' religious institutions. This has given way to a rise of syncretism and hybridization of an eclectic group of religious and non-religious themes and practices. In Japan specifically, exists a complex mosaic that mixes contemporary spirituality, scarce religious affiliation and secularization. In the next section, characteristics of pilgrimage in contemporary society, and in particular Japan, are explored.

4. 3. 2. Pilgrimage in contemporary society and its characteristics

As academics comment (Hanegraaff, 2000; Houtman & Manscini, 2002; Heelas, 2006; Okamoto, 2015), having religion institutions seen their influence reduced in the public spheres of society, the interpretation of the world and values has diversified, and at the same time, religion has been confined into the private sphere of human life. Okamoto (2015) refers to such situation as 'privatization of religion'. The new role of religion has had consequences on sacred sites as well. Traditionally, holy places were under religious administration, which controlled the site itself, as well as the narratives and meanings surrounding it. However, in a modern society 'privatization of religion', the traditional narrative has become just one of many other possible ones. Individuals, now not under the influence of religion in the public sphere, have given new narratives and meanings to sacred sites, which coexist with the traditional one uphold by religious administration. In other words, Okamoto (2015) argues that in sacred sites 'place' and 'tradition' have been separated, and as a result, a diversification in the purpose for visiting sacred sites and traversing pilgrimage routes occurred, with secular motives replacing or coexisting with faith, utilizing sacred sites as tourism destinations as well. For example, Okamoto (2015) notes that, while the number of pilgrims in Santiago de Compostela has been increasing, some of them were not solely motivated by devotion but rather by reasons not related to traditional Christian religion, such as New Age books, self-discovery or outdoor exercise. Some of them were also more interested in the experience of traversing the pilgrimage route and in the interaction with other pilgrims than in completing it and praying before Saint Jacob's remains. In a similar note, Blom, Nilsson and Santos (2016) note that modern pilgrims in Santiago de Compostela have developed new behavior patterns and may choose to change routes and gather at destinations that may not be included from the traditional ones. The search for an individual spirituality, not necessarily connected to a traditional religious institution's teaching, has allowed the pilgrims to choose their itinerary and finish their travels at their place of choice. A portion of these pilgrims, disenchanted by the mass commercialization of Santiago de Compostela, have chosen to finish their trip at Fisterra, located nearly 100 kilometers from the final destination and considered for centuries the 'edge of the world'. The Catholic Church does not recognize the section as part of the pilgrimage route, considering it only as a tourism destination. This stance is at odds with local tourism authorities, which seek to develop the route to Fisterra. However, pilgrims have been increasingly choosing to continue from

Santiago de Compostela to Fisterra, motivated for individual spiritual longings and viewing the pilgrimage itself as an individual journey and not one under the regulations of the Church.

Following the above trend, the definition of 'pilgrimage' has expanded to include secular pilgrimage sites (Collins-Kreiner, 2009; Yamanaka, 2012). These sites are connected to nationalism such as the Mao Zedong Birthplace in Shaoshan, China, or to important historic events such as the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. Some researchers have identified trips to places related to celebrities as secular pilgrimages, such as the former residence of Elvis Presley (Alderman, 2002). In Japan, pilgrimage is used even in the popular culture elements such as anime, where the fans 'sacralize' places like Shinto shrines that appear as settings in different series (Ishii, 2009; Imai in Yamanaka, 2012; Okamoto, 2015) or conversely making a certain location site a 'sacred' destination. Another type of secular pilgrimage connected to nationalism and notions of ethnic linkage is 'diaspora tourism', where people travel to their ethnical homelands for personal or genealogical reasons (Shackley, 2001; Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Stausberg, 2011). While individuals may organize and travel due to diasporic reasons for themselves, this kind of homeland-trips may in some cases be a strategy carried out by organizations which aim to strengthen the link between the diaspora community and their homeland (Stausberg, 2011). National parks can also be visited to reconnect with one's country (Turner & Turner, 1978). Pilgrimage may be associated with politics as well, such as visitors to Lenin's tomb in the Kremlin testify (Turner & Turner, 1978). Clearly, pilgrimage today has a diverse range of significance and meaning to a diverse range of visitors. This has a clear implication to tourism with according changes expected. Therefore, next is a discussion on the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism in contemporary society.

4. 4. Pilgrimage and tourism

4. 4. 1. Research on pilgrimage tourism

The relationship between pilgrimage and tourism has received attention from scholars. Graburn (1983) points out that tourism plays the role of a rite of passage and of cyclic rites in modern Western societies, and that pilgrimage and tourism are not opposites, but instead are part of a continuum of inseparable elements. Collins-Kreiner and Wall (2015) state that religion is still among the most common motivations for travel, and that pilgrimage has emerged as a key tourism phenomenon in our contemporary society. Sacred places have an important relationship with contemporary tourism (Olsen & Timothy, 2006; Timothy, 2018), with many of them such has Jerusalem, Notre Dame Cathedral or Uluru attracting many visitors and being promoted by the local authorities. Advances in health care, economic situation and mass transport systems have made easier the access to pilgrimage locations (Mori, 2005; Reader, 2007; Stausberg, 2011). However, the amount of research conducted on the subject of tourism and religion is comparatively low. Even pilgrimage as a research concept in tourism studies barely existed before the 1990s (Collins-Kreiner, 2016). Vukonic (1996) states that the interrelationship between tourism and religion is a fact that deserves scholarly interest. However, he mentions that while, the early tourism scholars often mentioned religion, there have been few studies about the interrelationship between religion and

tourism up to the time his work was published. Sixteen years later, Yamanaka (2012) notes that the number of investigations conducted on the intersections of religious phenomena and tourism is still low, citing as a major cause the widespread conception that the two subjects are not related. Study on the subject has not been carried out evenly regarding geographic locations. In particular, there is still a comparative lack of research done on Asian pilgrimage sites (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2011). This is a rather surprising fact in spite of the importance of both tourism and pilgrimage in the Asia-Pacific region. The United Nations World Tourism Organization and the Global Tourism Research Center (2017) have pointed out that the Asia-Pacific region has become the second most visited regions after Europe, as well as the fastest growing, registering a 9% growth in 2016, which accounts for 308 million arrivals. At the same time, this geographic area has the greatest number of pilgrims and travelers for religious events, for both international and domestic tourism (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2012). As it can be seen, studies on pilgrimage tourism in Asia-Pacific still have to match its contemporary importance and future prospects.

As it can be observed, the academic literature on pilgrimage tourism is relatively scarce. The current state of pilgrimage tourism research can be summarized on the following five themes.

1) Visitor profiling and characteristic

From the 1980s onwards, there was a shift in scholarship regarding the object of study in the field of pilgrimage. Until then, most of the bibliography focused on the sites themselves or the overall sociological feature of the community undergoing a liminal state. However, researchers began to stir their investigations from 'general' and 'external' elements of pilgrimages to the individual 'inner experience' of pilgrims. This process developed through three phases (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). First, we can find the construction of typologies, such as Cohen's typology of visitors' experiences. After this, the second phase consisted in the deconstruction of typologies. Finally, the third phase consisted in understanding that a visitor may undergo a diverse range of experiences during his travels. This experience does not only depend on the pilgrimage, but also on other factors such as the visitor himself and his perceptions on his travel. Current research on pilgrimage focuses on these subjective aspects. Since then, research has focused on the guests' travel motivations and attitudes (Winter & Gasson, 1996; Olsen, 2013; Lois-Gonzalez & Santos, 2015; Nyaupane, Timothy & Poudel, 2015; Blom et al, 2016, Kim et al, 2016; Lopez, Lois Gonzalez & Castro Fernandez, 2017), the guiding received by visitors, (Collins-Kreiner & Gatrell, 2006), pilgrim typologies (Ron, 2009; Damari & Mansfeld, 2016), authenticity in pilgrims' experience (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart, 2008), among other subjects related to the visitors.

As noted before, there has been a diversification in the purpose for visiting sacred sites and traversing pilgrimage routes, with secular motives replacing or coexisting with faith, utilizing sacred sites as touristic destinations as well. This had led scholars to research the motivations and profiles of today's pilgrims. For example, Okamoto (2015) notes that, while the number of pilgrims in Santiago de Compostela was increasing, some of them were not motivated by devotion but rather by reasons not related to traditional Christian religion, such as New Age books, self-discovery or

outdoor exercise. Some of them were also more interested in the experience of traversing the pilgrimage route and in the interaction with other pilgrims than in completing it and praying before Saint Jacob's remains. Also, there are examples of secular pilgrimage sites, not originated from religion. These sites can be connected to nationalism such as the Mao Zedong Birthplace in Shaoshan, China, or to important historic events such as the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland.

2) Management of pilgrimage-related destinations

In the area of site management, scholars have studied the interaction between institutions (private and public), visitors and devotees, which is at times in conflict (Vukonic, 1996; Shackley, 2001; Digance, 2003). McGuire (2013) notes that an issue on modern gender politics has been created because the prohibition of women on Mount Omine is at odds with UNESCO's assumptions about shared human values. Other studies have explored the collaboration between travel agencies and religious institutions. In Medjugorje, Slovenia, the Catholic Church and travel agencies are cooperating in pilgrimage-themed travels by combining spiritual care with leisure (Delakorda Kawashima, 2016). Kadota (2016), in his study on the management of the sacred site of Sefa-Utaki in Okinawa, Japan, points out how its UNESCO Heritage Site designation and posterior tourism development have challenged the site administrators on how to maintain its sense of 'holiness' of the site while protecting it. Henderson (2011) studied the management of the Hajj, the Islamic pilgrimage that takes places in holy sites located in Saudi Arabia. The exorbitant numbers of pilgrims performing the Hajj every year has led to different logistical challenges, which are dealt in various ways such as strict quota mechanisms, and transport and infrastructure development. Commercial opportunities have also flourished for both Saudi investors and overseas development companies. Because of its scale, the Hajj is not without its dangers for the pilgrims, who face risks of injure and disease, immense crowds and the possibility of stampedes. However, Saudi authorities have prioritized commercial development over vernacular heritage protection. Digance (2003) studied the tensions between the different stakeholders (traditional owners, managers, commercial operators and visitors) regarding concerning access and use of sacred sites of Uluru (popularly referred to as Ayers Rock). The site was under the sole management of the Pitjantjatjara Anangu aboriginal people until the middle of the 20th century, when tourism began to develop slowly. Since 1985, inalienable freehold title to the park was granted to the Anangu, who jointly manage it with the parks authorities. Anangu people are involved in tourism since 1960s, but some activities that the visitors carry out come in conflict with the Anangu beliefs, who consider it a sacred site. For example, tourists often wish to climb Uluru, something that is discouraged by both the park authorities and the aborigines (in November 2017, a decision was made to ban climb as of October 2019). Some studies have also noted that the mass commercialization of pilgrimage sites may be detrimental to their appeal for visitors. Bom, Nilsson and Santos (2015) note that a portion of travels in Santiago de Compostela feel disappointed at the tourism development that the historical goal of the pilgrimage has underwent, and have chosen to end their travel at Fisterra. Religious institutions

may oppose mass tourism development in sacred sites arguing that it minimizes the religious content and significance of performing pilgrimages (Vukonic, 1996).

3) Host perception of pilgrimage tourism

Host's perceptions of impacts related to pilgrimage tourism has not been deeply researched, although some studies have been conducted. The small number of research done in this area could be attributed to the focus on the visitors' experiences since the 1980s (Collins-Kreiner 2016). In consequence, research on pilgrimage tourism has left the host communities' perceptions on impacts comparatively understudied, either in its economic, social and environmental impacts. Nevertheless, some studies on pilgrimage tourism have addressed the host communities. For example, Terzidou, Stylidis and Szivas (2008) found that hosts' religiousness is an important influence in the perception of tourism impacts. Pourtaheri, Rahmani and Ahmadi (2012) conducted a study on the different impacts that pilgrimage tourism brings to rural communities in Iran and conclude that social impacts were the most prevalent. The study also shows that the impacts vary across the different analyzed communities. Other studies, although not focusing on social impacts, mention the subject in relation to pilgrimage tourism such as Joseph and Kavoori (2001), on a study of Western tourism impact on the pilgrimage town of Pushkar, India. While not specifically a study on perceptions of social impacts, through their analysis on the local discourse of resistance to tourism, the researchers mention different social impacts, including changes in religious ceremonies, local facilities, cultural commoditization, Western acculturation, notions on sexuality, drug use and life style. The study also shows that the support for tourism is not equal across the community members. Rizzello and Trono (2013) state that tourism has a small economic impact on the community due to numerous factors, such as the geographical position of the shrine. Other factors are the prevalence of one-day visitors and inadequate promotion policies. Knight (1996), for his analysis of Japanese rural tourism, studied the communities in Hongu village, Japan, which are part of the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage. He notices that, although tourism development brought prosperity to the area, its benefits were perceived to vary by the local population, creating 'winners' and 'losers' inside the host community and producing social divisions. For example, employment benefits are restricted as recruiting happens through social connections. Also, public funding is d not to be distributed equally, as tourism-related areas were given priority over the rest. Locals also mention that visitors have negative impacts on the community through pollution, competing for gathering of mountain plants, road congestion and overcrowding leisure facilities.

4) Economic impact of pilgrimage tourism

There is no extensive bibliography on this subject and research on it is still scarce. Still, there are some studies about economic impacts in pilgrimage destinations, at least marginally. Lois-Gonzalez and Santos (2015) notice that spending in the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage trails is uneven. Because visitors are encouraged to walk the trails, they diminish their spending during their travel to avoid cluttering themselves and only when they reach their goal at Santiago de Compostela, their spending normalizes again. Accommodation spending is spare because of the availability of cheap

public shelters, which offer not only a place to rest, but also a space to socialize with other pilgrims. In addition, pilgrims tend to prefer to keep on their travel rather than staying in one specific area and many accommodations only allow one night stays. Therefore, it is observed that a same pilgrimage may impact each community differently. At the same time, it is noticed that, beyond physical limitations, the reasons for undertaking the pilgrimage may not be conductive for the consumption of material goods. These considerations are of importance as the pilgrimage trails pass through different communities which expect a positive economic impact from tourism activity. However, the study does not examine how the communities perceived the economic impacts described by the authors. Research conducted by Fernandes, Pimenta, Francisco Goncalves and Rachao (2012) on the Portuguese route to Santiago de Compostela reaches similar conclusions. The researchers observe that the visitors' consumption patterns along this particular pilgrimage route are also of low economic impact, and therefore not contributing to the improvement of the locals' quality of life. However, this study does not research the perceptions of tourism impacts by the host community. Finally, Progano (2018b) conducted a dedicated research on perceptions of socio-economic impacts on a community located along a pilgrimage trail by taking as case study the Chikatsuyu community, located in the Kumano Kodo's Nakahechi trail, Japan. This study takes a methodological approach by conducting interviews to different members of the community, who are classified following Krippendorf's typology (Krippendorf, 1987) according to their economic dependency on tourism. Results show that, although economic impacts were regarded as minor, small-scale tourism was generally perceived as positive across the participants. In particular, the participants had an overall positive perception of social impacts. The presence of international tourists was welcomed across the four types of participants, who perceived them as polite, friendly and interesting because of the novelty they brought to their daily lives. Awareness towards tradition and its conservation, as well as an increase in events, were also positively influenced by tourism development. The participants perceived almost no negative impacts. Finally, in comparison to other communities located along the pilgrimage route, the participants recognized that Chikatsuyu was less developed and received less benefits because of its location as a waypoint place. However, they were satisfied with the level of development achieved by Chikatsuyu and had no ill feelings towards more developed communities. In conclusion, economic benefits remained limited, as they were mostly concentrated in specific sectors (particularly accommodations), and minor overall. However, locals seemed satisfied with the current economic development of Chikatsuyu and were aware its small-scale. On the other hand, the participants mostly perceived social benefits as positive.

5) Environmental conservation, safety and pollution

Finally, a small number of researchers have studied environmental conservation in pilgrimage sites. McGuire (2013), in his study of Mount Omine as a UNESCO Heritage site, comments that, while individual places in the Kii peninsula may be well protected, the overall environment of the region was degraded. He claims that former sacred peaks of the area where damaged by road construction managed by yakuza-owned corporations, who bought the land under the pretense of building

amusement parks and dairy farms. He also reports that nearly 50,000 tatami mats, which were brought as debris of the 1995 Kobe Awaji earthquakes, were dumped illegally in a ravine. This dumpsite not only ruined the landscape, but also brought environmental harm because of the presence of toxic pesticides in the mats. In 1996, there were moved to a legal dumpsite. Another issue is the large amount of tunnel and road construction. This large-scale construction by the so-called 'construction state' (*doken kokka*) is common to the rural areas of Japan. These constructions, apart for damaging the landscape, obstruct the religious activities of religious practitioners. Infrastructure, such as stairways and platforms to facilitate access to the mountains, was mentioned by practitioners to disrupt their ascetic activities, which require a certain amount of physical effort and uncertainty. This could be attributed to a tendency noted among travelers to opt from the hardships of ascetic pilgrimage to more comfortable, mundane travel if given the choice (Reader, 2014). Shinde (2007) conducted research on the environmental situation of the sacred complex of Tirumala-Tirupati, located in India. He mentions that in the past pilgrimages were limited over space and time, so the environment had time to regenerate itself. However, modern tourism development made significant changes in scale, frequency and character of visitations. This resulted in new pressures to the environment of the sites. Tourism development also brings infrastructure expansion in order to answer to the visitors' demands for accommodation and services. Another factor is the pressure from the growing consumerism among both visitors and locals. These challenges should be tackled through involvement in environmental management of the stakeholders, including the religious institutions. He notes the potential for a realization of the links between religious values and ecology through maintenance activities such as tree planting. Alley (1994) conducted an ethnological study on the interpretations of pollution in the Ganges river, located in Benares, India. The Ganges river has become polluted from the different types of waste that are dropped in it, including animal carcasses, human corpses, excrement and household garbage. The government and NGOs have been working to prevent pollution and to educate the population on it, but these approaches were criticized by devotees, who believe that the Ganges river is sacred and therefore cannot be impure; although they expressed their anger towards waste dumping. Also, the ritual practice of bathing in the Ganges to cleanse impurities is a central aspect for both residents and pilgrims, making difficult its regulation. Kato and Progano (2017) mention how erosion in the pilgrimage trails of Kumano Kodo was prevented through the introduction of volunteer programs called Conservation Walks. These programs attract around 2000 volunteers each year, including companies who want to do CSR activities or staff training, schools and community groups. The idea of the Conservation Walks incorporates the Japanese concept of *fushin*, a tradition in which community members would contribute with labor or funds to restore houses or infrastructure. The term *fushin* is now utilized as volunteer work for restoring public facilities.

To summarize, it can be seen that pilgrimage tourism, while is an acknowledged research field in tourism studies, is still relatively under-researched despite its importance in contemporary tourism development. In particular, economic and environmental issues were undertaken by fewer studies. From a geographic perspective, there is an imbalance in research regarding the Asia-Pacific region, which is currently understudied despite its weight in both fields of tourism and pilgrimage. In the

next section, a presentation on pilgrimage-related destinations in Japan is presented in order to contextualize the present research, which takes as case study a pilgrimage destination from said country.

Illustration3: Entrance to the Kumano Hongu Taisha (photograph taken by the researcher).

4. 4. 2. Pilgrimage sites as tourism destinations in contemporary Japan

Pilgrimage in Japan contains several characteristics that differ from its Western counterparts. Reader and Swanson (1998) comment that it should be noted that Japanese pilgrimages may not only be based on a single site, but also in multiple sites that are linked together. These are not exclusive to Japan, but they represent one main characteristic of Japanese pilgrimages: a tendency to link multiple sacred sites in a numerical structured route. These multiple-site routes do not have a single 'center', but instead encompass a determined geographical area where the sites that should be visited are located. Another characteristic is that there is a greater scope in performance of their itineraries in the sense that there is not a single route that must be traversed. Instead, pilgrims have the choice of visiting the sites at their own convenience. Also, pilgrims have the option to complete

the pilgrimage in a number of journeys over a period of time, since the focus is on visiting all the sites.

Spiritual travel has a long tradition in Japan in the form of pilgrimage to the different sacred sites of the country, having its origins in the ritual travels of mountain ascetics along the Kii peninsula and Shikoku Island, as well as the official visits to the Imperial Ise Grand Shrine. During the Heian period (794-1185), Emperors and aristocrats traveled from the capital city of Kyoto to the mountain ranges of Kumano, located in the Kii peninsula. Their travel included ritual purifications and other religious practices, but contained as well leisure. In the Kamakura period (1185 - 1333), the new military class joined the aristocracy in the pilgrimage practice. The Muromachi period (1336 - 1573) witnessed the emergence of mass pilgrimages, with large numbers of peasants undertaking the Kumano pilgrimage as well. During this period, the Ise pilgrimage also began to gain popularity among larger sectors of society (Hoshino, 1981). However, the Edo period (1603-1868) is perhaps where the complementarity of spirituality and tourism can be seen more clearly. During this era, the Tokugawa government imposed travel restrictions that prevented the population from freely traveling. But the authorities allowed travel under special conditions such as pilgrimages (Funck & Cooper, 2013; Guichard-Anguis, 2009). During this period, conditions for travel improved as well. Finally, advances in agriculture improved the life of the general population (Hoshino, 1981). This led to the popularization of travel among the population, making mass tourism a combination of pilgrimage and sightseeing. The most visited pilgrimage destination was the Ise Grand Shrine, which eventually replaced Kumano in popularity (Funck & Cooper, 2013; Reader, 2014). While Ise peregrinations became more of a leisure travel, travelers strongly motivated by religion (Funck & Cooper, 2013) visited other pilgrimages such as the Saikoku pilgrimage, the thirty-three Kannon temples in the West, and the Shikoku Henro, the eighty-eight temples in the Shikoku Island.

Immediately after the end of the Second World War, the hardship that Japan faced, both social and economically, decreased the number of pilgrims overall (Hoshino, 1981; Reader, 2014). During the postwar period, the Saikoku pilgrimage gradually fell in popularity and instead the Shikoku Henro pilgrimage started to attract a growing number of visitors since the 1960s (Reader, 2014). The rise in popularity of the Shikoku Henro was based on a change on its public depiction, and transport and infrastructure development since the 1950s (Reader, 2014). In particular, different stakeholders such as mass media, transport companies and tourism offices have played a key role on transforming Shikoku Henro from a faraway, dangerous place to an enjoyable pilgrimage tourism destination where visitors can take on journeys of self-discovery in a setting where ‘traditional’ Japanese culture lives on (Mori, 2005; Reader, 2014). Because of its new image as a repository of traditional Japanese culture, which is believed to be lost in Westernized urban areas, it could effectively replace Saikoku pilgrimage and become the ‘national’ pilgrimage (Reader, 2014). In this sense, the postwar ‘pilgrimage boom’ originated, in part, as a search for identity by the Japanese people (Hoshino, 1981).

In contemporary Japan, pilgrimage is still a popular practice and is closely associated with tourism. Local authorities realize the importance of their pilgrimage resources and actively promote them.

This has also prompted the revival of pilgrimage routes such as Kumano Kodo. Other authorities, realizing the tourism potential of pilgrimage, have created routes that link different sites, such as in Nagasaki's Churches and Christian Sites, now a WHS. As Reader (2014) mentions, religious organizations have also realized the potential of pilgrimage for attracting visitors and have created modern pilgrimage routes by linking different locations. For example, monks from the Fukuoka prefecture developed in 1987 a new Kannon pilgrimage in northern Kyushu Island, which consisted of 33 places, similar to the Saikoku pilgrimage. To help promote this new pilgrimage, the monks collaborated with transport companies and tourist offices. Monks from the Suo Oshima Island, located in Yamaguchi prefecture, also developed an eighty-eight-stage pilgrimage based on the figure of Kodo Daishi. The pilgrimage was not traveled anymore but was revived in 1988 as a way to increase visitors and help the local economy.

Tourism development, however, has not always been smoothly carried out, and both environmental and conflicts with locals have arisen (McGuire, 2013). Tourism development has also come in conflict with religious traditions and practices associated with pilgrimage. For example, Jimura (2016) and Amada (2018) mention that tourism development facilitated access and signaling in dangerous mountain passes that were previously only accessible through the guide of Shugendo practitioners, who also provided interpretations of the place based on their traditional beliefs. However, easier access brought by tourism development conflicted with the Shugendo practitioners' role: infrastructure has made places reachable without their assistant and provided interpretations of them as landmarks without emphasizing their religious significance. Similar observations were made by McGuire (2013), who notices that increased accessibility brought by tourism infrastructure changed the mountains' physical environment and reduced the danger of ascending it, which is an important aspect in Shugendo practices.

The UNESCO World Heritage Sites have also a relationship with tourism development in Japanese pilgrimage sites. Since its late sign of the World Heritage Convention in 1992, Japan obtained different World Heritage designations at a fast pace, already obtaining 4 by 1993 and 20 by the end of the 20th century. In the 2000s, Japan experienced a nationwide 'World Heritage boom', as local communities realized the potential of tourism development for economy revitalization through a UNESCO designation (McGuire, 2013; Matsui, 2014; Sawamura, 2016). Not only local authorities and organizations have been working towards obtaining a designation, but also the national government, through the Agency for Cultural Affairs, has supported this movement by doing public recruitments for enlisting WHS candidates (Sawamura, 2016). Yet, it was noted that that obtaining a WHS registration did not necessarily meant an increase in tourists. Well-established tourism destination did not gain a significant increase in tourists; however, for destinations that were not well established, the WHS designation did have a positive effect in increasing visitors (Jimura, 2015). Naturally, pilgrimage sites and routes are no exception to the 'World Heritage boom'. The first Japanese pilgrimage route designated as a UNESCO Heritage Site was the 'Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range' in 2004, encompassing a large system of pilgrimage routes and temples located in the Kii Peninsula. This designation had an influence on other

pilgrimage routes such as Shikoku Henro, whose related stakeholders have started to work towards a UNESCO designation (Mori, 2005; Okamoto, 2015). Christian churches located in the Nagasaki prefecture were also inscribed in the tentative World Heritage list in 2004, under the support of different stakeholders but principally of the Sekai Isan no Kai, a group that included media, government officials, local companies and church members. (Matsui, 2013). The property was finally designated as a WHS as a cultural site in 2018. Although the sites were not connected through pilgrimage routes, different courses have been created to organically connect the properties and commodify it for tourism consumption. For example, in 2005 a guidebook was published presenting the properties and as sacred sites of a pilgrimage site named Nagasaki pilgrimage. Local culture and nature spots were presented as well (Matsui, 2013; Okamoto, 2015).

The UNESCO WHS designations and posterior tourism development can come in conflict local traditions. McGuire (2013) points out that UNESCO's assumptions about shared, universal human values conflicted with Mount Omine's traditional prohibition of women. Mount Omine, part of the 'Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range', has traditionally banned women from climbing it. However, UNESCO's designation has put pressure on the banning, which in turn has prompted a segment of Shugendo practitioners to question whether UNESCO has the right to overturn a 1300 years old tradition. They also voiced concerns that, if the ban is lifted and women and then day hikers are allowed, the sacredness of Mount Omine will be lost and it will become a profane mountain like Mount Fuji, which has been climbed as a leisure activity since the postwar period (Okamoto, 2015). It is important to point out that prohibiting women from accessing sacred mountains is not an exclusive tradition from Mount Omine and existed in other in other parts of Japan as well (Nomoto, 2006). Jimura (2016) notes that, due to the designation of the Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range site in the Kii Peninsula, the religious practices of Shugendo have been hindered due to the instalment of signposts. In Shugendo, senior practitioners, called *sendatsu*, traditionally act as religious guides and pathfinders along the mountainous trails. However, the new signposts undermine the role of the *sendatsu* because they show the names and the correct paths to follow.

To summarize, it can be observed that pilgrimage has historically played an important role in Japanese society, being connected to leisure travel for centuries. In contemporary times, pilgrimage continues to be a present element in Japanese society, being now a valuable tourism resource for regional economies. However, while pilgrimage has a long history in Japan, the way it is understood in Japan is influenced by contemporary spirituality. Therefore, in the next section, an outline of elements from contemporary spirituality present in pilgrimage is presented, with an emphasis to their relationship to Kumano Kodo.

4. 4. 3. Contemporary spirituality in Japanese pilgrimage

While religious traveling is a deep-rooted institution in the history of Japan, contemporary spirituality has also reinterpreted traditional sites and given new meaning to them. Below, the

phenomena of powerspot, *iyashi* and *yomigaeri* are explored, as well as they relationship with tourism in Kumano Kodo, the selected site to conduct fieldwork for the research.

The concept of powerspot first emerged in 1986, with the phenomenon started to grow exponentially since 2006 (Suga, 2009). The media coverage of different powerspots in televisions and magazines, as well as the trend of celebrities visiting them, were important factors for its expansion (Okamoto & Kawasaki, 2012; Kotera, 2011). The term generally refers to specific places where some people believe 'energy' or 'power' gathers, which can confer a wide array of worldly benefits like good fortune, healing or luck in romance. They are akin to 'power places', a concept that emerged in the West during the 1960s, which includes places such as Stonehenge, the Pyramids and Mount Everest (Stausberg, 2011). Japanese powerspots are broadly divided in two types: natural sites like Yakushima Island; and Shinto-related sites such as the Kumano Hongu Taisha, the Ise Grand Shrine or Izumo Shrine. In contrast, Buddhist temples are scarce (Tsukada & Omi, 2010). They can also be classified as sites with a previous religious background or not: Buddhist and Shinto sites on one hand, and natural sites on the other (Okamoto & Kawasaki, 2012). Individuals are also encouraged to 'discover' their own personal powerspots in small shrines, grooves, local parks, aquariums or libraries if they feel 'power' in the location (Kotera, 2011; Okamoto & Kawasaki, 2012).

This 'powerspot boom', which started in the 2000s, is particularly popular among women, which is the segment targeted by media outlets (Okamoto, 2015). Publications tend to present the power spots with beautiful photographs, along with data on access and opening hours. They may also present information on accommodation, local specialties and food, making them similar to tourist guides (Tsukada & Omi, 2010; Okamoto, 2015). Because of the numerous powerspots in existence and the variety of practical benefits they are believed to bestow, places can be chosen and visited as if it was a 'powerspot catalogue'. Local administrations and tourism organizations noticed the 'powerspot boom' and began to present their own destinations as powerspots (Okamoto, 2015). In some cases, conflicts can arise because visitors' motivations and behavior may not be in line with what the site administrators consider suitable (Okamoto & Kawasaki, 2012; Okamoto, 2015).

Kumano has been portrayed as a 'powerspot', with the Kumano Hongu and Nachi Taisha as representative sites (Suga, 2009). The case of Kumano is interesting because it encompasses both types of powerspots. The Grand Shrines contain a previous religious background due to their Buddhist-Shinto syncretism. Also, since the sacred sites are located inside a mountainous pilgrimage route, natural powerspots such as the Nachi waterfall are also portrayed as powerspots. However, because of the characteristics of mountain ascetics traditions, nature and religion cannot be clearly separated. For example, Nachi is both a natural waterfall as well as a place for religious practices and rituals. These characteristics favor the proliferation of powerspots of both categories in the same area. Still, it is interesting to note that, while publications portray Kumano as a powerspot, local tourism organizations are not focused on it (Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau, personal interview, December 15th, 2016). The concept is perceived as too 'modern' for the desired destination image, which instead aims to project a 'historical' and 'traditional' image of the site. This shows that many discourses may exist inside a singular pilgrimage site (Sepp, 2014). In this case in

particular, pseudo-scientific elements present in new age tourism such as 'energies' are not encouraged by the local tourism organizations, which, as it is shown below, prefer spiritual tourism-related content such as holistic wellness and self-reflection. However, media and visitors who consume it do indeed look for powerspots in Kumano Kodo. This portrays the influence of Japanese media in contemporary spirituality (Kotera, 2011), that sometimes is outside the local tourism organizations' control.

The concept of *iyashi* has experienced high notoriety in Japan since 1988 (Matsui, 2013), being associated with different products and services, including traveling. *Iyashi* should be understood as physical and mental restoration, or a holistic healing. This '*iyashi* boom' has also influenced tourism promotion and activities in pilgrimage sites. For example, the four prefectures of Shikoku Island collaborated with railways operator JR Shikoku to promote Shikoku Henro as a place for healing. (Matsui, 2013). Since the second half of the 1990s, there has been an increase in mass media such as magazines and television shows presenting Shikoku Henro as a place of *iyashi* (Mori, 2005), with this process accelerating since the 2000s (Kadota, 2012). Kumano Kodo has also been promoted as a place for *iyashi* by its local tourism organizations (Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau, personal interview, December 15th, 2016) by creating services aimed at this market segment. In order to diversify its tourism products, Tanabe city promotes wellness-related walking tours and activity courses that are carried out utilizing the cultural and geographic features of Kumano Kodo (Guichard-Anguis, 2011). The development of a wellness tourism-related program is in line with the guidelines that the Japanese government laid out in its Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Plan, approved on June 2007. The Plan calls for the development of new types of tourism which focus on thematic travelling, experience and exchange with others.

Similarly, Kumano is also promoted as a place of revival or *yomigaeri* (Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau, personal interview, December 15th, 2016). However, for a location to be a place of 'revival', it should also be firstly one of death. Truly, death played a central role in Kumano's traditions. Early depictions of the region pictured it as the place of burial and dwelling for the dead, with even one of the mythological creator gods of Japan, Izanami, being entombed in a local village. By the Heian period, Buddhism re-signified death as a salvific process and, consequently, Kumano as a place of rebirth and a Buddhist Pure Land (Moerman, 2005; Gorai, 2004). One of the most known legends related to Kumano as a place of death and resurrection is the story of Oguri Hangan. Here, the protagonist was poisoned, reincarnated as a hungry ghost (*preta*) and finally resurrected in human shape by being carried to the Yunomine hotsprings, located in Kumano, and submerged in its waters (Koyama, 2000; Gorai, 2004). Other legends and traditions portray Kumano as a place of death and subsequent rebirth, with the suicidal ritual voyage of Fudaraku Tokai being perhaps the most prominent (Moerman, 2005). Still, it should be noted that self-immolation religious practices are not exclusive to Kumano and existed in other parts of Japan in both Buddhism and Shugendo traditions (Gorai, 2004). Although guidebooks and media portrayed the image of Kumano as place of death until the second half of the 1990s (Terada, 2014), current tourism promotion does not portray Kumano as a place for the dead, switching to narratives presenting it as a sacred site or a

place of revival. In turn, '*yomigaeri*' has acquired significance akin to physical and mental restoration from the toils of daily life. Usage of the term is found in promotional material about the wellness programs of Tanabe city. In the first volume of the 'Kumano de Kenko Wokingu' magazine (Health Walking in Kumano), examples can be found, such as "The forests of Kumano will uplift your heart. For contemporary people, Kumano Kodo is the road of revival" (2006, pp. 1).

Wellness programs include Kumano's hotsprings as part of its courses. Originally, the Kumano hotsprings had a religious significance as well. For example, the Yunomine hotspring, said to have opened 1800 years ago, is connected to the Tendai temple Toko-ji, where the Buddha of Healing, Yakushi Nyorai, is enshrined. This Buddha is venerated in Kumano's ascetic practices (Yugi, 1986). Miyake (2001) adds that mountain ascetics used to perform the pilgrimage ending's celebration in this hotspring. It was also believed to heal any sickness and was related to themes of resurrection because of its connection to the Oguri Hangan's legend. On January 8th, a festival named Yunomine Yoka Yakushi Sai is celebrated in Toko-ji temple to ask for the prosperity of the hotspring and the wellbeing of the participants. Nowadays, hotsprings have become one of the main tourism attractions of the area, ranking as the third visitors' motivation (Wakayama Prefecture Tourism Agency, 2015). Finally, it should be noted that the local tourism organizations promote Kumano as a place of *iyashi* or *yomigaeri* only to its Japanese visitors (Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau, personal interview, December 15th, 2016). This shows that destination managers can utilize a multiplicity of narratives to promote the site to different visitor segments.

4. 5. Importance of national segmentation in tourism studies

As explained in the previous sections, there has been an increasing diversification regarding visitors to pilgrimage sites due to the influence of contemporary spirituality and the presence of international tourists. This is also the case of Japanese pilgrimage sites, which are understood through non-traditional spirituality and visited by inbound tourists. Based on this, the present study specifically will take national segmentation as sampling criteria in order to produce theoretical and practical contributions. Therefore, in this section, an explanation on national segmentation and its significance in tourism studies is presented. While there are many debates on the definition of nationality and nation, a discussion on this subject is beyond the scope of the present study. During this research, the term is simply utilized as 'country of origin' and it is taken for methodological reasons: to classify the two analyzed group in a clear way in order to study visitor diversification in pilgrimage sites.

The classification of tourists into distinctive, meaningful classes is a subject that has been often analyzed in tourism (Mehmetoglu, 2004; Moscardo Pearce & Morrison, 2008), as it is regarded that tourists exhibit a wide range of differences between them (Cohen, 1979). Moscardo et al (2008) divides these approaches into a priori, where segments are selected before data analysis, and a posterior, where segmentation is derived from the obtained data. Perhaps the first researcher to develop a detailed typology of tourists is Cohen (1972), who categorizes them into four categories: organized mass tourists, individual mass tourists, explorers and drifters. Since then, different

approaches have been applied to effectively segment a tourist market. Demographic and geographical bases for market segmentation have been popular in tourism studies because they are simple in terms of statistical analysis and thus easier to implement (Moscardo et al, 2008). Other researchers have developed different basis for tourist categorization and segmentation. Cohen (1979) constructed a categorization of tourist experiences based on five modes: recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental and existential. Mehmetoglu (2004) utilizes psychographics (travel philosophy, travel motive and personal values) as a basis for creating an alternative tourist categorization, arguing that people usually choose their travel destination based on them. Andreau, Kozak, Avci and Cifter (2005) conducted survey-based research and, through cluster analysis, made five categories of tourists: fuzzy, active, recreational-type, escapists and relax-quiet. Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele and Beaumont (2010) employ a two-step approach to segmentation which takes into consideration the stakeholders' views on how they identified their own market and later, carrying out surveys on the tourists, segmented the destination based on the variables identified previously.

As it can be observed, there are many criteria for carrying out market segmentation in destinations. Among the approaches to market segmentation, country of origin is among the most used ones (Moscardo et al, 2008). Tourists from different countries are reported to display a wide range of differences in various spheres. Pizam and Sussmann (1995) conducted research on behavioral characteristics by country. They identify the perceptions that British tour-guides have for visitors of four nationalities in order to test whether there were differences by country in these perceptions. Pizam and Reichel (1996) analyze the effects of nationality on tourist behavior by asking 124 Israeli tour-guides their opinions on 20 behavioral characteristics of American, British, German and French tourists on guided tours. The results show that 18 out of 20 characteristics were perceived to be considerably different between these four nationalities. Nationality is also an important factor influencing the perception of destination image (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Lee & Lee, 2009), consumer behavior (Rosenbaum & Spears, 2005), travel information acquisition (Chen, 2000; Gursoy & Umbreit, 2003), impact of visual material (MacKay & Fesenmaier; 2016), travel motivation (Kim & Lee, 2000), attitudes towards nature (Fox & Xu, 2016), spatial behavior (Dejbakhsh, Arrowsmith & Jackson, 2011) and host-guest interactions (Reisinger & Turner, 2008). You, O'leary, Morrison & Hong (2000) show the applicability of push-pull theory in national segmentation contexts, as results showed differences among the sampled nationalities in their study. The reason for these behavior differences is believed to be derived from the different cultural background of each country, and not strictly from linguistic or geographical factors (Pizam & Sussmann, 1995). Dejbakhsh et al (2011) mention that numerous studies that cultural norms influence tourist behavior and that the biggest differences were found between Western and Eastern visitors. As it can be observed, nationality plays a very important role in tourism when carrying out research on visitor segmentation.

However, country as segmentation criteria has come under criticism. Dann (1993, in Pizman & Sussmann, 1995) criticize it by arguing that in the process of globalization, national cultures should be discarded in favor of four segmentation variables: personality, lifestyles, culture, tourist-roles and social-class. In response to these arguments, Pizman and Saussmann (1995) state that, while

country of origin is not the only decisive factor, it is still among the number of factors that should be taken into account when analyzing tourist behavior. For example, Lee, Kim, Seock and Cho (2008) researched tourists' attitudes towards textiles and apparel-related cultural products among American, Korean and Chinese female consumers. In their results, they note that females who pursued innovative ideas tended to be more interested in foreign cultures and saw themselves as cosmopolitan citizens. These females, regardless of their nationalities, tended to purchase these products. However, American and Chinese females were noted to be more novelty seeking and motivated by history and culture. Predictably, novelty seeking was a weak indicator of Korean females towards Korean products. The cultural convergence theory has been another argument towards national segmentation. It states that, due to the advancements of globalization, technology and travel, immigration and internal national and ethnic marriages, the world is heading towards cultural homogenization, with a common set of cultural traits and practices (Reisinger & Crotts, 2009). On the other side, the cultural divergence theory argues the opposite: societies are maintaining their national sets of values, characteristics and lifestyles across countries and regions. They indeed possess different cultural and consumer behaviors (Reisinger & Crotts, 2009). Finally, a third theory, cross-vergence, holds that changes may occur as cultures interact with each other, resulting in new cultural characteristics (Reisinger & Crotts, 2009; Ralston, Gustafson, Cheung & Terpstra, 1993).

Regarding, methodology, research on national segmentation of consumer behavior is mainly carried out through statistical techniques, under a dominant paradigm of positivism (Salciuviene et al., 2005; Watkins & Gnoth, 2011). However, researchers (Salciuviene et al., 2005; Watkins, 2010) question the validity and reliability of survey-based methodological tools for motivation and values research in national segmentation context. Salciuviene et al (2005), for example, observe methodological limitations such as non-equivalence in sampling, translations of items in research instruments and problems establishing conceptual and metric equivalence. Jewell and Crotts (2002) note that quantitative-biased approaches only provide a list of superficial motivations, not touching deeper themes, as well as the researcher risking to list motivations that may not be the most relevant to the respondents. Watkins and Gnoth (2011) point out that standardized value surveys have limitations in national segmentation contexts, as these quantitative instruments do not measure if all respondents connote the same meaning to these values and also assume that all important values are covered by the survey, whether this is true of not. These issues are particularly relevant when undertaking national segmentation studies. How can the researcher be sure that the listed motivations will be relevant to all the studied national segments? At the same time, different nationalities may undertake travel for the same motives, but how can it been confirmed that all the visitors share the same underlying, deeper motivation for it? Because of this, qualitative methodological approaches have been suggested for studies utilizing national segmentation (Watkins, 2010), such as means-end (Watkins, 2010; Watkins & Gnoth, 2011).

4. 6. Main points, research gap, study objectives and expected contributions

Four main points can be observed throughout this bibliographic review. Firstly, due to the changes in the role of religion in contemporary society (Hanegraaff, 2000; Houtman & Manscini, 2002; Ito, 2003; Heelas, 2006; Okamoto, 2015;), there is a diversification in both motivation and behavior in pilgrimage sites (Mori, 2005; Matsui, 2013; Yamanaka, 2012; Sepp, 2014; Attix, 2015; Blom et al, 2015; Okamoto, 2015; Kim et al, 2016). Secondly, as sacred sites become international tourism destinations, its visitors have also become diversified. Visitors now may have little religious or cultural connection to the area. Examples of this are Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Pushkar (India), Kumano Kodo (Japan) or Uluru (Australia) (Joseph & Kavoori, 2001; Olsen and Timothy, 2006; Fernandes et al, 2012; Stausberg, 2012; Kim et al, 2016). Thirdly, despite the importance of inbound tourism in pilgrimage sites, national segmentation analysis has not been researched in the field of spirituality and tourism. Previous research mostly utilized categorizations based on belief (Winter & Gasson, 1996; Collins-Kreiner & Gatrell, 2006; Shuo, Ryan & Liu, 2009; Olsen, 2013; Nyaupane et al, 2015; Damari & Mansfeld, 2016) or general travel motivation (Fernandes et al, 2012; Matheson, Rimmer & Tinsley, 2014). However, nationality is observed to be a key factor when performing tourist segmentation in different areas (Reisinger & Turner, 1998; Chen, 2000; You et al, 2000; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Rosenbaum & Spears, 2005; Dejbakhsh et al, 2011; Girish & Ryan, 2011; MacKay and Fesenmaier, 2016). Fourthly, the Asia-Pacific region holds an immense importance in the tourism industry and a great potential for pilgrimage tourism development, but it is an understudied area (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2011; United Nations World Tourism Organization & Global Tourism Economy Research Center, 2016).

Through these four main points, the following two research gaps were identified:

1. Lack of studies that utilize national segmentation in pilgrimage sites, despite previous studies demonstrating the importance of the guest's country in tourism studies and the presence of inbound visitors in pilgrimage-related destinations in Japan and elsewhere.

2. Lack of studies in Asian pilgrimage sites, despite their importance in contemporary tourism.

In order to cover these research gaps, a qualitative investigation on value orientations of international and domestic visitors who travel a Japanese pilgrimage route is conducted, and an analysis on its similarities and differences is carried out. Through this study, academic contributions are expected in two fields. First, in the field of pilgrimage tourism, it will demonstrate the importance and applicability of nationality segmentation as a basis for diversification in pilgrimage, which is yet largely unexplored. The study also aims to contribute to the lack of research done in pilgrimage tourism in the Asia-Pacific by taking as a case study a Japanese pilgrimage route, the Nakahechi trail of Kumano Kodo. Secondly, study's results are expected to contribute to the small number of tourism research done in cross-national and national segmentation studies that utilized qualitative approaches, as it has been stated before. The study also aims to have practical implications for policy-makers, as its results are expected to be of relevance for public and non-public regional organizations that are developing their pilgrimage-related heritage to attract visitors,

in particular from overseas, by assessing what the different markets are looking for and consequently employ appropriate target strategies (You et al., 2000).

4. 7. Conclusion

This chapter offered a literature review on the concept of pilgrimage and its different connections to tourism to identify the diverse reality of contemporary pilgrimage tourism, specifically issues related to tourism development globally and in Japan. The new role of religion and the characteristics of contemporary spirituality were also explained, as they hold importance in visitor motivations and behavior in pilgrimage-related destinations. Emphasis was put on Japan's pilgrimage tourism, as the fieldwork for this study will be carried out in a pilgrimage site located in said country, and thus knowing its characteristics will assist in contextualizing the study. Another literature review was carried out regarding national segmentation in tourism studies. This segmentation criterion has been utilized successfully in tourism studies for studying visitors in a wide range of spheres, such as destination image, special behavior and travel motivation. However, pilgrimage tourism, while having a heavy emphasis on research about visitors, has not used national segmentation, even when pilgrimage-related destinations attract large numbers of inbound tourists.

Four main points were found through reviewing the academic bibliography and two research gaps were identified. In order to contribute to these gaps, the research objective is to carry out qualitative investigation on value orientations of visitors from inbound and domestic tourists who travel a Japanese pilgrimage route. By achieving the study's objectives, both contributions to academia and policy-making are expected. As it was mentioned in previous chapters, the case study was carried out using a section of Kumano Kodo, the Nakahechi trail located in Tanabe City, Wakayama prefecture, Japan.

Chapter 5: Theoretical framework

5. 1. Introduction

In the present chapter, the theoretical framework will be introduced by drawing from academic work cited in the previous chapters. In particular, there are five areas of importance for the construction and scope of the present study. These are the concept of pilgrimage, visitor diversification in pilgrimage sites, local perception, national segmentation and methodology. The main studies that were utilized for theoretical framework in these five areas are explained, as well as their importance in the present study.

5. 2. Theoretical framework

5. 2. 1. On the concept of pilgrimage

For the concept of pilgrimage, this research follows Collins-Kreiner (2010), as it was stated before. Said author defines pilgrimage from a geographic point of view as a form of circulation. This definition was taken because it provides a wide range to cover many types of pilgrimage. A definition related to religious notions would leave out secular pilgrimage, which is an important aspect of it in contemporary society (Alderman, 2002). On the classification of pilgrimage, the researcher follows the system named 'Modern Sacred Sites Dynamic Pattern', postulated by Yamanaka (2012). This classification is based on pilgrims' interpretation around two axes of 'religious site – non-religious site' and 'faith/consolation of the deceased/honoring – tourism/cultural heritage'. This system allows for a dynamic classification of religious sites in four categories, taking into account secular sites too.

Finally, because Japanese pilgrimage differs to the Western one, the researcher found the study of Reader and Swanson (1997) to be of importance to explain the characteristics of Japanese pilgrimage, which have been described in Chapter 4. In relation to pilgrimages in contemporary Japan, the study of Ishii (2009) and Okamoto (2015) provide good examples of secular pilgrimage, demonstrating the present influence of media such as anime. Progano and Kato (2018) provides an analysis of contemporary spiritual phenomena such as *iyashi* and powerspot and its relationship with pilgrimage tourism, particularly in Kumano Kodo. This study has also been of importance.

5. 2. 2. On visitor diversification in pilgrimage sites

The present study's approach to visitor diversification in pilgrimage is mainly based on the studies carried out by Okamoto (2015), who postulated the notion of privatization of religion. In his work, Okamoto (2015) states that contemporary society has distanced itself from traditional religions, which had a great importance and influence in the past. Because religion was one important base of society, it also regulated human relationships, ethics, traditions and key moments in human life, such as birth and death. Due to this overarching influence, religion guaranteed that the values between society and the individual were generally the same. However, in contemporary society,

because the influence of religion has waved, there are no basic guidelines for the individual on these matters, except the law. The individual in contemporary society no longer has a shared worldview or values with its fellows, leading to a process of diversification. However, this does not mean that religion has disappeared completely. Instead, it has been mostly limited to the individual's private life, leaving behind its influence in the public sphere of society. This process is called by Okamoto privatization of religion. Because of this, the individual is now free to construct its own system of beliefs, drawing from diverse sources such as traditional religion, foreign beliefs or New Age.

These considerations have also repercussions on sacred sites. Traditionally, religious authorities controlled the meanings and narratives of sacred places. However, in contemporary society, traditional narratives of religious authorities are but one among many possible ones. Individuals, not under religious systems anymore, bring their own meanings and narratives to places. This leads to a diversification in visitor profiles, who now come with a variety of motivations and perform different behaviors. In relation to pilgrimage specifically, Okamoto (2015) describes how the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage (located in Spain) is walked by visitors who do not go to church regularly, are not Christians or are not Spanish. He also states that many of them are not motivated by religious reasons, but by a variety of factors such as self-discovery, leisure or sports. They also place a greater importance on the experience of walking to the goal, rather than reaching the goal itself. All these considerations were of primordial importance for the present research, as it coherently demonstrates how visitor profiles have diversified in contemporary society due to the privatization of religion.

Other authors of importance for the present study's theoretical framework are Blom, Nilsson and Santos (2016), who demonstrate a similar situation. They state that contemporary pilgrims in Santiago de Compostela show motivations and behavior unrelated to traditional Christian faith, such as choosing to end their travel in Fisterra, a place not related to the pilgrimage, because they find it to be more meaningful for them as individuals.

5. 2. 3. On local perception on pilgrimage tourism

The perception of pilgrimage tourism by the local community, while it does not form the main focus of this study, is a theme that is discussed in different parts of this study. As it was stated before, however, there are not many studies on this particular area, as pilgrimage tourism tends to focus on the visitors (Collins-Kreiner, 2016). For this theme, the present research uses as framework the previous study of Progano (2018b), which analyzes the local perceptions of economic and social impacts by classifying the community through of the typology constructed by Krippendorf (1987). While there have been posterior classifications for local communities, it is still utilized in contemporary research (Brunt and Courtney, 1999) and is compatible with contemporary studies that point out the great importance of economic factors when evaluating tourism impacts (Ritchie and Inkari, 2008; Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo & Alders, 2013). For these reasons, the researcher thinks it still holds validity. Going back to Progano (2018b), this research demonstrates that economic impacts are perceived to be low along the pilgrimage trails, while the community viewed social

impacts positively. In particular, the interactions with international visitors were deemed as positive. It also demonstrates that the local community may not be interested in fast-growing tourism development that continuously brings more visitors to the area, but in a sustainable and small scale growth. It also showed how locals had different perceptions of domestic and international visitors. Also, the study by Lois-Gonzalez and Santos (2015) in Santiago de Compostela showed that visitors who walk reduce their spending to avoid cluttering and usually spend only one night in each locality, thus reducing economic impacts. They also showed that impacts differ across the communities in a single pilgrimage trail. These considerations have guided the present research to understand local perception.

5. 2. 4. On national segmentation

Regarding the criteria for national segmentation, this research mainly draws from the considerations of You et al (2000), who sampled long-haul visitors from Japan and United Kingdom. While this study employs a different methodological approach through push-pull factors, it demonstrates that nationalities differ in travel motivation (push factors) and in the importance they attach to destination attributes (pull factors). Because of this result, the study also suggests that DMOs should pay close attention to their visitors' nationalities in order to tailor their marketing approach to them. The work of Pizam and Sussman (1995) complements the previous study, analyzing the perceptions of British guides about tourists from Japan, America, France and Italy. The study found that the four sampled nationalities' behavior was perceived differently. Finally, the observations by Okamoto (2015) regarding the presence of multiple nationalities in pilgrimage sites were also of value to assess the potential of national segmentation studies in them.

5. 2. 5. On methodology

Moving to methodology, the seminal studies of Reynolds and Gutman (1988), and Gutman (1997) have been of key importance for both the theoretical understanding of means-end and its practical applications, which have been described in Chapter 3. The work of Klenosky et al (1993) has also been an important reference for the application of means-end in order to uncover what attributes of a destination were significant for the visitors. The criterion for choosing a qualitative methodological approach in national segmentation is founded by the considerations made by Watkins (2010). In this study, Watkins demonstrates the benefits of utilizing means-end because it addresses the limitations of survey-based research by giving voice to the participants and by placing individual values in a cultural and situational context. The work of Kim et al (2016) is also an important reference in this study, as it supported the applicability of means-end to research on pilgrimage tourism. However, this study differs from the present research in a number of aspects: it was carried out through hard laddering, it did not focus on national segmentation and was done at the end of the pilgrimage.

5.3. Conclusion

This chapter centered on explaining the main theoretical frameworks that have guided the present study in five main areas: concept of pilgrimage, visitor diversification in pilgrimage sites, local perception, national segmentation and methodology. Different academic sources, both Japanese and Western, were utilized to provide an ample and comprehensive theoretical approach that incorporates different viewpoints in a coherent way. In particular, the considerations of Okamoto (2015) were a main reference to assess the validity and importance of a national segmentation study in pilgrimage sites.

Chapter 6: Findings

6. 1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings from the fieldwork at Nakahechi. Firstly, the self-administered questionnaire results are shown for each of the sampled nationalities. As mentioned before, both nationalities were sampled on different socio-demographic data such as occupation, level of education, age, gender and length of stay, among others. Naturally, both nationalities were asked to fill the same questionnaire in their native language. Therefore, the questionnaire has versions in English and Japanese, each with identical content. Both are included in the Appendix for reference.

Next, the aggregate matrices and HVMs for both nationalities are shown. These findings constitute the results of the laddering interviews at Nakahechi and their consequent thematic analysis, which was carried put through the approach described in the previous chapter and with the assistance of CAQDAS to facilitate work and data management. After thematic analysis, Australians showed 50 elements (12 attributes, 24 consequences and 14 values) and Japanese, 41 elements (11 attributes, 18 consequences and 12 values). From this data obtained, an implication matrix was built for each sampled group. Finally, utilizing the data from the previous implication matrices, the following HVMs were constructed for each sampled group. When constructing the HVMs, decisions regarding the cut-off value and the inclusion of indirect relations have to be taken by the researcher. The approaches decided for the current study are explained in light of previous research on the subject.

6. 2. Questionnaire findings

6. 2. 1. Socio-demographic data for Australian participants

Socio-demographic data obtained from the sample of 25 Australian participants showed that the majority of them were between 55 and 64 years old (n=14), with the rest of the participants being evenly distributed among the remaining age ranges. Regarding gender, the majority of the participants were women (n=14). In relation to their marital status, most participants reported to be married (n= 13), while the number of those who reported to be single (n=5) or other (n=7) had a close relationship.

The participants' level of education was high, with most them holding a bachelor or equivalent (n=11), and a post-graduate level (n=9). The rest of the participants reported to hold a post-secondary non-tertiary education (n=3), upper secondary (n=1) or lower secondary (n=1). Questionnaire results also showed a variety of occupations among the participants, as the table below indicates:

Occupation	n=

Teacher	2
Public employee	5
Professional	5
Student	3
Company employee	4
Self-employed	3
Other	2

Table 1: Occupation of Australian participants.

Most of the participants travelled with one companion (n=15), while the rest travelled with 3 (n=2) or 4 (n=8) companions. There were no solo travelers. Regarding the type of relationship with their travel companions, most of them reported to travel with their partner (n=15), friends (n=12) or family (n=1).

Results showed that most of the Australian participants were traveling to Kumano Kodo for the first time (n=21). Of the participants who did visit Kumano Kodo previously (n=4), three of them visited there once before, while the last participant, who lived in Japan at the moment of the interview, visited there 3 or more times. Finally, regarding their length of stay during the current trip, participants stayed an average of 5 days and 4 nights in Kumano Kodo.

6. 2. 2. Socio-demographic data for Japanese participants

Out of the 25 Japanese tourists interviewed, most participants were an age range of 55-64 (n=9), with the rest of them were ranges of 45-54 (n=8), 18-24 (n=4), 25-34 (n=2) and 35-44 (n=2). There were more female (n=18). Regarding marriage status, participants were almost evenly divided between single (n=11) and married (n=14). All of them stated to have Japan as their country of residence. The participants also reported a high level of education, with the selected education levels being bachelor or equivalent (n=19), shorty cycle tertiary education (n=4) and post-secondary non-tertiary education (n=2). Regarding their occupation, the following table shows a variety of jobs, with company employee being the most numerous:

Occupation	n=
Public employee	4
Student	2
Company employee	9
Self-employed	2
Part-time	1
Unemployed	1
Other	6

Table 2: Occupation of Japanese participants.

In relation to their travel party composition (including themselves), most of them informed to travel with in groups of 2 (n=13), with other participants indicating travel parties of 1 (n=5), 4 (n=4), and 3

(n=3). Participants reported to have been travelling with their family (n=13), friends (n=6) and partner (n=1).

Most of the participants reported to have not travelled to Kumano Kodo before their current trip (n=20), while the ones who did (n=5) visited it once (n=4) or twice (n=1) before. Finally, the average length of stay for their current travel in Kumano Kodo was 3 days and 2 nights.

6. 3. Laddering findings

6. 3. 1 Six phase thematic analysis

As previously stated, thematic analysis was conducted following the six-phase thematic analysis methodology developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which has been explained previously. After the interviews were recorded, they were transcribed into individual digital files. Thematic analysis of the interviews' contents used the assistance of QDA Miner Lite, a CAQDAS, to facilitate the process. It is important to note that this software does not conduct thematic analysis by itself, but organizes and facilities its process for the researcher. After thematic analysis was carried out, Australians showed 50 elements (12 attributes, 24 consequences and 14 values) and Japanese, 41 elements (11 attributes, 18 consequences and 12 values).

6. 3. 2 Aggregate implication matrices

From the data obtained through thematic analysis, an implication matrix was built for each sampled group[1]. Following previous research in constructing matrices (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988), the numbers are written in fractional form with direct relations to the left of the decimal and indirect relations to the right of the decimal. In previous research, both direct and indirect relations were aggregated and represented with only one number (Klenosky et al, 1993; Gengler et al, 1995). However, it was considered that this distinction should be kept as it would show results in a more detailed way, as well as not hampering their clarity, thus following other studies (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988).

6. 3. 3 Hierarchal Value Maps

Finally, utilizing the data from the previous implication matrices, the following HVMs were constructed for each national group. When constructing each HVM, usually a cut-off value is decided in order to decide which elements will appear. Previous research does not indicate a set cut-off value but instead suggest trying out and evaluating different approaches. However, a cut-off value between 3 and 5 relations for a given sample of 50 to 60 interviews is suggested, with 4 being the most common one (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Others (Gengler et al, 1995) stated that only associations mentioned at least by 5% of participants should be included. For this study, considering that 25 sample interviews were made for each group, the cut-off value was set at 2. Before reaching

[1] Both aggregate matrices are included in the Appendix.

this decision, a cut-off value of 3 as well was also trialed. However, different elements had to be taken out of the HVMs with said level, especially in the case of the Japanese HVM which, as it will be shown latter, tends to have a heavy focus on fewer elements in comparison to the Australian HVM, were a wider range of elements were identified. Therefore, by setting a cut-off value of 2, more comprehensive HVMs could be constructed. Setting responses by at least 5% of the participants was not considered as the value would be too low and thus include elements that may not be sufficiently relevant.

There was also the matter of deciding whether to only include direct relations equal or above the cut-off value, or also incorporate the indirect relations as well. Previous research (Klenosky et al, 1993) has argued that indirect relations should also be present in the HVM as some participants may elaborate more than others during the interviews, and thus mention more intervening meanings between concepts than other participants. Therefore, by only including direct relations between elements, the results would be biased as it would underweight the responses from more verbose respondents who would have more indirect relations between concepts. However, other research stated that the cut-off value may be set for direct relations, or direct and indirect relations (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). For this research, both direct and indirect relations were counted.

In order to make the constructed HVMs easier to read, different measures were undertaken. Firstly, and as mentioned before, an alternative format (Gengler et al, 1995) was adopted to structure the HVM to make them easier to both construct and read. Also, by assigning a different color to the attributes (orange), consequences (light blue) and values (yellow), the maps were made visually easier to follow. In order to show which pathways in the HVMs are more dominant, numbers were added to each of the links between the different elements. These numbers shown have many times each element leads to the next one in the chain. This way, readers can easily discern which pathways are more dominant without having to utilize the implication matrices.

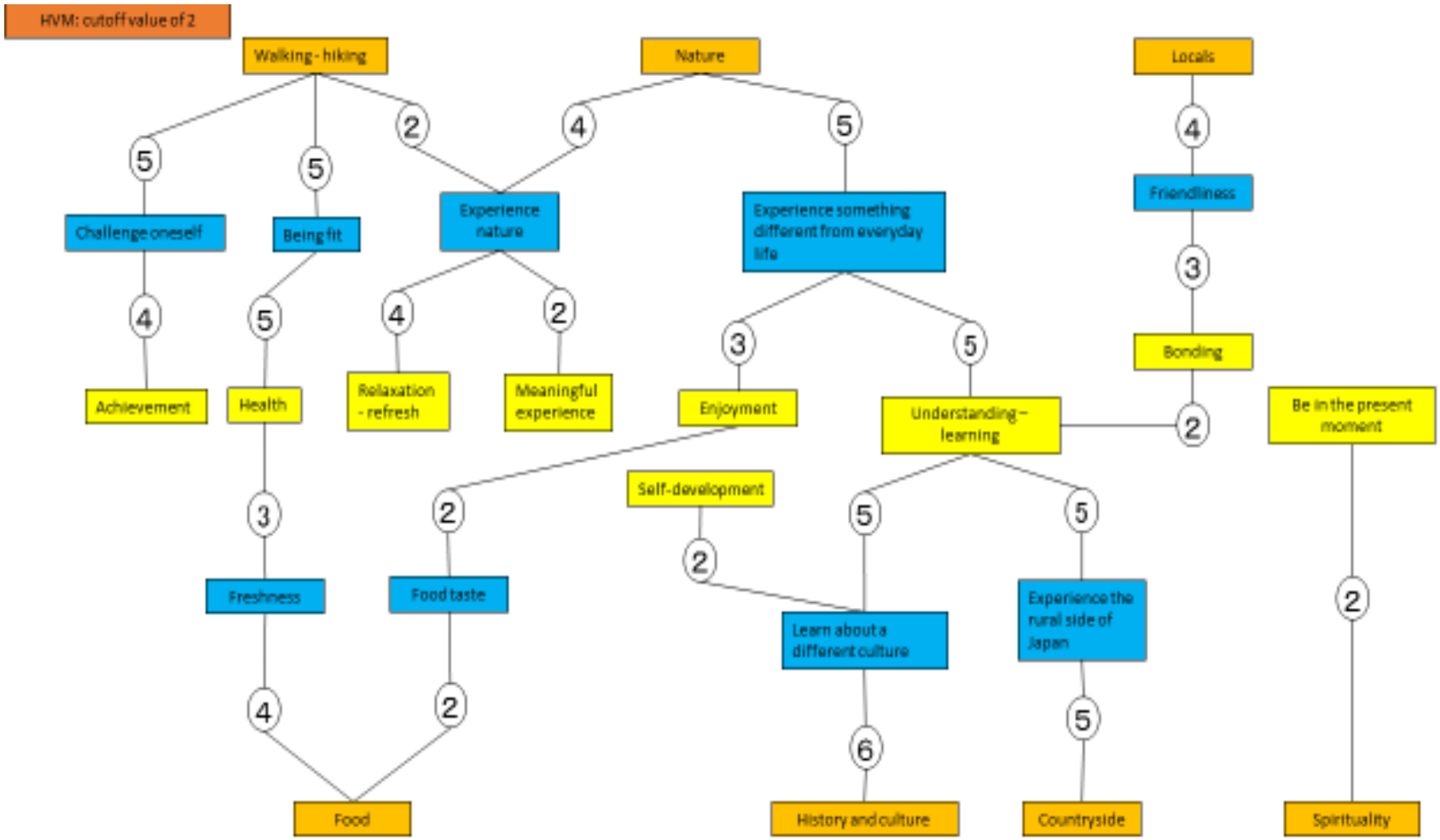


Figure 1

Hierarchal Value Map for Australian participants

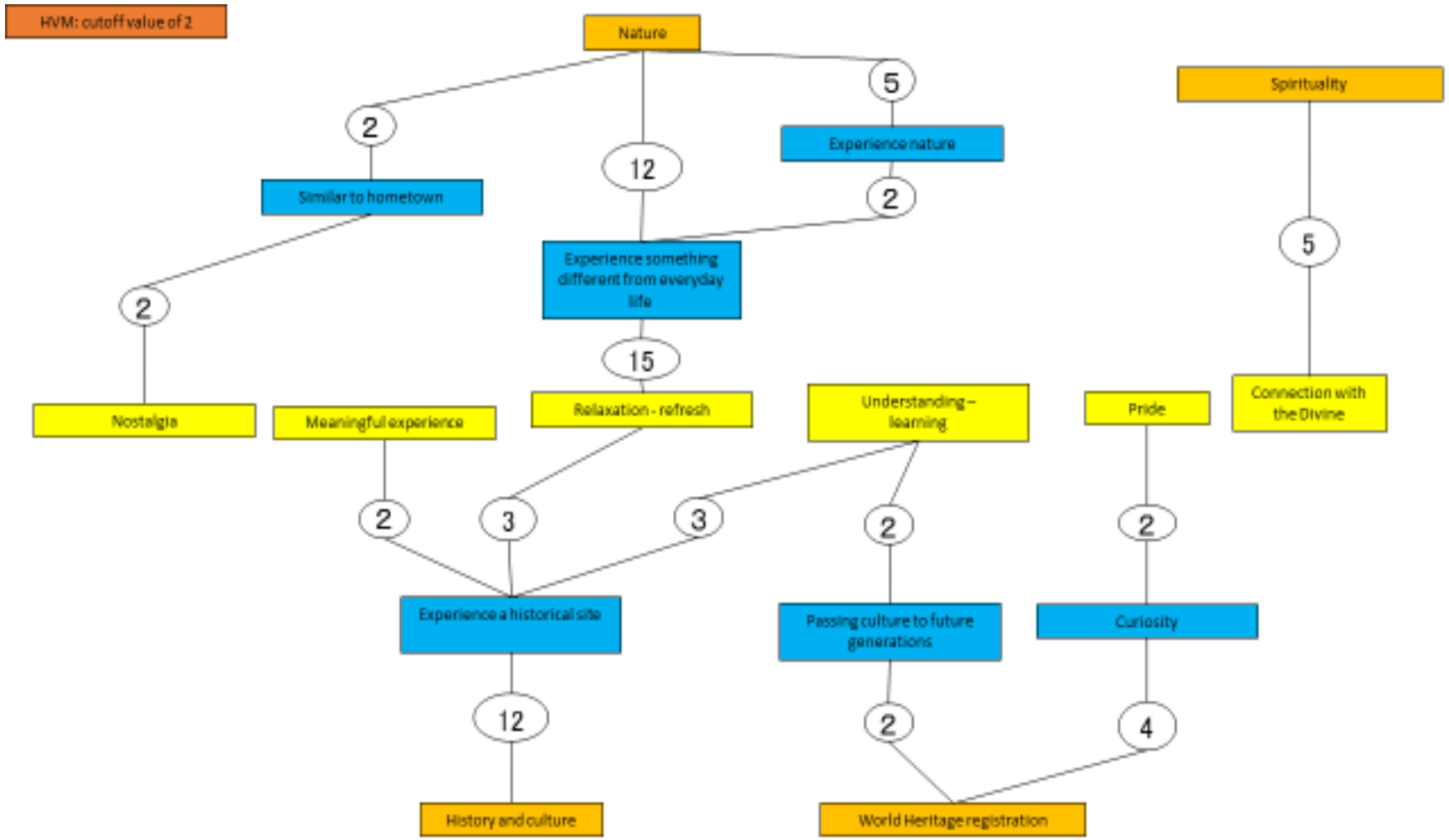


Figure 2

Hierarchal Value Map for Japanese participants

6. 4. Conclusion

As it can be observed, the fieldwork at Nakahechi provided valuable data for further academic discussion on the field of pilgrimage tourism. The questionnaires, while not the main purpose of this research, provide a detailed visitor profile and thus a contextualization for data. Regarding the HVMs, the main outcome obtained from the fieldwork, their construction provided multi-level findings that poses an important depth to them. As explained before, the utilization of means-end provides a detailed picture of the visitors' motivations, touching deeper themes related to personal values that are relevant to the participants themselves through the build of MEC chains in HVMs. In the HVMs presented in the current chapter, a wide variety of elements can be observed, how certain elements are present or absent in specific nationalities and how certain elements present in both maps can lead to different elements. All this data obtained from both the questionnaires and the HVMs is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7. 1. Introduction

The present chapter concentrates on the discussion of the research findings, shown in Chapter 6. Analysis is presented utilizing secondary sources, such as official data from public bodies and the Bureau itself, as well as previous academic research. Some observations made during fieldwork are also included to help understanding certain discussed aspects.

Regarding the chapter's structure, firstly a brief discussion on the questionnaire results is offered, although they do not constitute the main finding of this study. Discussion is provided on their socio-demographic data and travel profile, while discussions similarities and differences between each sampled nationality. Next, a detailed analysis on the HVMs is presented. In the discussion, a total of 8 attributes present in the HVMs are analyzed in their own section, as well as their related consequences and values. Similarities and differences found in each HVMs are also discussed. Some direct quotes from the participants are included to further enrich the discussions present in the chapter.

7. 2. Discussion on questionnaire's results

Although the present research is not aimed at providing a detailed analysis of its quantitative data, a brief discussion on them is offered utilizing previous academic studies and secondary data.

Firstly, the majority of the Japanese and Australian participants were in an age range of 55-64 years old. This result is similar to what previous research has observed regarding visitors to heritage and pilgrimage sites. Chandler and Costello (2002) noticed that tourists visiting heritage sites had a mean age of 49 years old. Fernandes et al (2012) noticed in their study in Santiago de Compostela that the sampled visitors in their research had an average age of 43 years old. Gonzalez Santa-Cruz and Lopez-Guzman (2017), in their study on the cultural visitors in Cordoba, Spain, noticed a prevalence of persons over 40 years old.

The average level of education was also high for both Japanese and Australian participants: the former had a large number of participants holding a bachelor degree or equivalent (n=19); while the in latter most participants had a bachelor degree or equivalent (n=11), and a post-graduate level (n=9). As with the last point, these results are in line to what other researchers found out in previous studies. Chandler and Costello (2002) found out in their study that tourists interested in heritage sites had an above average level of education, with 54.6% of them having a college degree, which was above the national average in America of 23.6%. Fernandes et al (2012) noticed that the sampled visitors in Santiago de Compostela's Portuguese route had predominantly a higher level of education. Nyaupane et al (2015) have pointed out in their study that the sampled visitors were generally well educated, with 50% of them holding a Bachelor's degree, and 24% holding a post-graduate degree.

The prevalence of female tourists in spiritual and pilgrimage destinations was also noted by previous researchers. Damari and Mansfeld (2016), in their analysis of the evolution of pilgrims' typecast, noted that in the latest stage of development the female tourists were the predominant gender. Shuo et al (2009) found out in their study on the temple of Da-Lin, located in Taiwan, that 57.8% of the sampled visitors were female. Okamoto (2015) also mentioned that media outlets targeted women as the main market segment for promoting spiritual-related content such as powerspots. Okao (2014) noticed that female visitors at the Shinteiji temple in Japan were more inclined to participate in practices related to contemporary spirituality than their male counterparts, who preferred to take part into more traditional practices. However, sampled visitors in other studies have been showed to be mainly male (Nyaupane et al, 2015).

Regarding the participants' travel composition, both nationalities reported to travel in small groups: Japanese mostly travelled in groups of 2 (n=13), while the Australians travelled in groups of 2 as well (n=15). The predominance of small groups is in line with the tourism planning designed by the Bureau, which stated its decision to focus on Western tourists and small groups. This is because it is estimated that this tourist type would have long stays and spend more money by walking the Kumano pilgrimage routes, and enjoying the traditional Japanese scenery and spiritual culture (Japan Tourism Agency, n.d.; Nagatani, 2017). The Bureau has also stated its aim at tourism development that can be sustained over time instead of promoting mass tourism in the area. The relationship with their travel companions was, however, different. Japanese participants reported to travel with their family (n=13) or friends (n=6), while Australian ones reported to travel with their couple (n=15) or friends (n=12).

Finally, regarding average travel length, Australian participants showed to stay longer than their Japanese counterparts, with and the former group staying 5 days and 4 nights in comparison of 3 days and 2 nights of the latter group. The obtained information is in line with the data provided by the Bureau's online reservation system, which showed that international visitors stay an average of 2.50 nights, while the Japanese visitors stay 1.45 nights (Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau, personal interview, 2018). Data by the national government also showed similar results, as Japanese domestic visitors stay an average of 2.28 nights (Japan Tourism Agency, 2017). The Japanese visitors' shorter stays may be attributed to different factors. Firstly, the Japanese visitor in average does not take many paid leaves (Prime Minister of Japan and Cabinet, 2012; 2016), limiting the number of overnight stays. Secondly, most domestic tourists come from the Kansai region, where Wakayama, Osaka and Hyogo prefectures are located (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018), and thus are relatively near the destination. Thirdly, the visitors informally mentioned on several occasions that they relied on automobiles for transport, which reduced the necessity of overnight stays.

In sum, while not being the present study's main subject, quantitative data collected in the questionnaires has shown to be in line with previous research and with the secondary sources consulted.

Illustration 4: The Chikatsuyu community during winter (photograph taken by the researcher).

7. 3. Discussion on Hierarchal Value Maps' results

The first noticeable difference between both HVMs is the number of elements present in each of them. Utilizing a cut-off value of 2, the HVM from the Australian sample has a total of 25 elements in it (7 attributes, 9 consequences and 9 values). On the other hand, the HVM constructed from the Japanese sample has 16 elements (4 attributes, 6 consequences and 6 values). As it can be observed, while certainly the Japanese showed a range of elements, they tended to concentrate on a few of them. In order to better organize the material, a discussion is given on each of the eight attributes that appear in the HVMs; "history and culture", "locals", "nature", "spirituality", "countryside", "World Heritage registration", "hiking-walking" and "food". Quotations from the participants are identified with numbers (for example, Australian N1-25 and Japanese N1-25).

7. 3. 1. Attribute "history and culture"

Both nationalities showed interest in the attribute of "history and culture", but later showed some differences in its related consequences and values. For the Australians, "history and culture" was mainly connected to the consequence of "learn about a different culture", which led mainly to the

value of “familiar-learning” and, to a lesser degree, to “self-development”. Below, quotations related to the first value are shown:

> “(Deepening my knowledge on other people) enriches my thinking, which enriches my world, my interest in art and history, differences in being” (Australian N12).

> “It helps you understand the Japanese and their traditions. Because is completely foreign to us, or to me” (Australian N4).

> “I think it is just the idea of trying to be open-minded and remembering that what you grew up experiencing isn't the only thing and that different people live differently. All over the world all the time. And everybody's way of living is right for them. It's the idea of trying to broaden my horizons and understand other cultures. And same with the religion fits into that cultural thing, Shinto, Buddhism and stuff like that. It is also very interesting” (Australian N13).

> “I think it's interesting to experience different foods and traditions and rituals, different from you. Specially coming from Australia where our culture is very mish-mash・it's very interesting to see one that has evolved over many, many thousands of years” (Australian N5).

Other participants connected “history and culture” with “self-development”:

> “I think, once again, that your world is based on the culture around you… so you kind of understand yourself better, going to another culture. New ideas and understandings that you may not have. You understand why or how you are, and why people are kind of different. And just having experiences is kind of fun, you know? You always want to have Japanese experiences and it is fun when that happens” (Australian N15).

The historical aspects of Kumano Kodo were also relevant to the Japanese participants. Obviously, as it was part of their own culture, they did not see it as an opportunity to come closer to a foreign tradition, but as being in a historical site. This was named as the consequence of “experience a historical site”, which led to three different values. The first one was “understanding-learning”, as quoted below[2]:

> “Traveling isn’t just going and seeing for a bit. If you know the (destination’s) background and if you study it for the next time, traveling becomes more meaningful” (Japanese N7).

> “The world has become smaller, isn’t it? But I don’t understand it. Things like faith and such, I don’t have an opinion on them. I think that, basically, human beings are all the same: they are happy, they are fun and they are regretful. But I think it is something difficult to understand, so it would be good if I could” (Japanese N4).

[2] All the quotations from the Japanese participants were translated by the researcher.

> "I want to know about them (the memories of the past). I think there are many tough ones" (Japanese N16).

Also, the Japanese participants linked "experience a historical site" to the value of "relaxation-refresh", as they felt a sense of calmness around historical structures:

> "It relaxes me. It is amazing… It doesn't mean that I'm researching history whatsoever. I just think that people are so incredible. They built and incorporated themselves as part of this daily existence, it's amazing" (Japanese N12).

> "It's hard (to explain). I simply feel calm, you know? Modern buildings and lifestyles make me tired. Perhaps there were good things in the past" (Japanese N18).

Finally, a smaller number of participants mentioned that they had a "meaningful experience" when they were visiting the historical heritage of Kumano:

> "(I feel) peace, harmony (…) In Japan, there is a way of thinking that says that were not just human beings, but instead that all things have a spirit (*tamashii*). So I think that perhaps in a tiny place inside my life there is happiness and I feel changed. I feel like appreciating all things" (Japanese N24).

As it can be observed, "history and culture" is mostly related to the value of "understanding-learning". The relationship between learning and travel has been recognized centuries ago, with the European Grand Tour being perhaps one of the most renowned examples in the world (Towner, 1985), although this is still an area that lacks sufficient academic study (Falk, Ballantyne, Packer & Benckendorff, 2012; Roberson, 2018). In their literature review on the subject, Stone and Petrick (2013) noticed that traveling has been demonstrated to bring different benefits in knowledge, personal growth and life skills. In particular, travelers are more likely to have learning experiences if they travel willingly, such as in the case of this study's participants, than when compelled by exterior motivations (Roberson, 2018). Learning in tourism contexts also transcends traditional school-based passive knowledge transfer, as the visitors learn by engaging in the different experiences (Falk et al, 2012). In the present study, participants mentioned similar situations, as they mentioned that they learnt not only by reading information on the area, but by engaging with its environment and community:

> "For us, it is important to try to understand the country along the way. To do that, you need to do the things local people do such as catching public transport. In big cities it's too hard because you can't interact very much with people. If you go out to smaller locations with less visitors, you see people are happy to spend time with you because they don't see so many travelers. They talk to you, spend time with you and engage with you it different way, you never know what will be. You then learn a bit of the country" (Australian N3).

> "It makes it more whole, like you are seeing Japan in its glory, the business in the cities and the tourists flocking to the big sights. And now・we didn't see anyone yesterday while we were walking. So you are getting a different sense of Japan" (Australian N4).

Regardless "self-development", Morgan (2010) has found that travels can present the visitor with opportunities to encounter Otherness, whether in terms of different cultures (such as the case in the present research) or nature. These encounters carry important transformative potential, in particular if the travels are conducted by foot, such as in pilgrimage, because it promotes a contemplative mood. All these elements can be found in the Australian participants' travel experience: they were immersed in a foreign culture and employed slow modes of travel, such as walking. Roberson (2018) also mentioned that travel may prompt travel to learn about themselves. Concepts related to self-development are a common topic in contemporary spirituality (Olsen, 2015). For example, the Shikoku Henro pilgrims also stated that they are motivated to walk the trails for self-reflection (Mori, 2005). This follows the trend mentioned in Chapter 4 about contemporary spirituality being concerned more on the private sphere of the individual than traditional narratives (Okamoto, 2015).

Surprisingly, "history and culture" was also connected to relaxation for the Japanese visitors. In this regard, is important to remember that, although tourists may go to visit heritage sites to learn about them and educate themselves, they also go for a variety of reasons, with relaxation being one of them (Prentice, 1993; Waitt, 2000; Poria, Butler & Airey, 2003). Another factor for the connection between "history and culture" and "relaxation" is that the cultural heritage of Kumano is deeply connected to its natural environment and, as explained in the attribute "nature", nature produces a state of calmness and peace in humans (Ulrich, 1981; Velarde, Fry & Tveit, 2007; Ryan, Weinstein, Bernstein, Warren Brown, Mistretta and Gagne, 2010). In conclusion, the connection between cultural and historical heritage and relaxation may seem surprising at first but it has been previously studied by different academics.

7. 3. 2. Attribute "locals"

Regarding the attribute of "locals", both nationalities showed differences. "Locals" were mentioned only once by the Japanese, thus not meeting the set cut-off value and not being present in the corresponding HVM. while the Australians made several mentions of them. With a cut-off value of 2, the most significant chain led to their "friendliness" and then to the value of "bonding", which was also connected to the value of "understanding-learning". In other words, the Australian visitors mentioned how friendly and open were the locals towards them.

> "(The locals are) Just very kind and they go out of their way to help you. They greet you" (Australian N20).

> "But I also think that I love the Japanese. I find them very amusing, they have a great sense of humor. And they are very welcoming and calm" (Australian N23).

> “To understand something, you need to be able to relate to people, and if they are friendly, that helps” (Australian N25).

> “When we walked into the town tonight, 'where are you going?' and he showed us the way. I think five or four people said 'Konnichiwa', whereas in everywhere we have been in Japan nobody has done that. You just feel welcomed there” (Australian N3).

As said before, “locals” was mentioned only once by the Japanese visitors, thus not making it to the set cut-off value and not appearing in the HVM. In relation to this, previous study carried out by the researcher (Progano, 2018b) in Chikatsuyu village, located in the Nakahechi trail section of Tanabe city, showed that some members of the community had a negative view of the Japanese tourists as they seemed cold and uninterested in interacting with them, although no specific major conflicts were mentioned. On the other hand, the community members had positive views of the international tourists because of their perceived friendliness. In the present study, it seems that the Japanese visitors do not show a high level of interest in interacting with the host communities in the Nakahechi trail. However, the Japanese participants in the present study mentioned their interest in understanding the Japanese pilgrims from ancient times that traveled to Kumano Kodo. In this regard, they appear to view the pilgrimage area from a historical perspective. Below, extracts from the participant answers are provided to support this observation:

> “The people from ancient times took the Kumano trail and traveled it, went to pay visits to Koyasan, etcetera. Walking while reflecting on their feelings and experiencing history is nice, I think” (Japanese N10).

> “I can have an experience similar to the ones that people from the past had” (Japanese N3).

> “Well, Kumano is a trail that has existed since ancient times, so while I walk it I wonder how the people from the past felt. I want to experience this” (Japanese N9).

An explanation for this might be found in the differences regarding mobility for both nationalities. Australians tended to have longer stays and value more slow ways of moving, such as hiking. Japanese visitors, on the other hand, had shorter stays and showed little interest in hiking in Kumano Kodo. As mentioned before, during informal talks, most Japanese mentioned that they did not walk the trail and instead relied in automobiles, mostly cars, to travel to and within the area. These observations are in line with official data by the Wakayama prefectural government, who estimates that, from 637,523 visitors that traveled to Tanabe in 2017, only 441,686 (12.1%) of them lodged (Wakayama Tourism Agency, 2018). Because of this faster travel behavior, their interaction with the locals might be less in number and superfluous in comparison. Previous studies (Dickinson, Lumsdon & Robbins, 2011; Kato & Progano, 2017) have established the relationship between walking and slowness, characterized by a conscious engagement with the locality, including its host community. Another possible explanation might be found in the way the destination is being promoted to domestic tourists. Analyzing Tanabe’s marketing strategies or Kumano Kodo’s overall destination image is beyond the scope of this research, but its importance should not be underestimated, as

previous research has demonstrated that different nationalities have diverse perceptions on destination image (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000). Regardless, previous studies have established that there are differences in host-guest interactions among different nationalities. Reisinger and Turner (1998) have discussed the importance of cultural differences for developing host-guest interactions. Pizam and Reichel (1996) asked Israeli tour-guides their opinions on 20 behavioral characteristics of American, British, German and French tourists. They found that the guides perceived differences among nationalities in activities such as shopping and photographing. Crompton (1979) has mentioned that interactions with locals are reported to be sometimes difficult to carry when hosts and guests have little common identity. However, in this case, Australians mentioned different positive interactions with locals and an interest in interacting with them, even with the present language and cultural differences, thus showing that this is not always the case. Overall, the reasons for this point seem to be due to circumstances regarding travel patterns and mobility in Kumano Kodo, as this pattern is not common to other pilgrimage sites. For example, in the Shikoku Henro pilgrimage, the interaction between locals and visitors is regarded as a characteristic point of the pilgrimage due to the hospitality tradition of *settai*, in which the locals support and help the pilgrims. This assistance can take many forms: such as giving food or drinks, financial help, encouragement, accommodation, guiding or travel goods (Fujiwara, 2017). Places of rest aimed at pilgrims are also constructed to support them (Higasa & Kuroda, 2011). The *settai* tradition is based on the belief that assisting pilgrims is beneficial because helping the pilgrim is equivalent to helping Koubou Daishi (774 - 835), a revered Japanese Buddhist monk who founded the Shingon Buddhist branch and travelled the Shikoku island. Since the 1990s, the *settai* tradition has received renewed attention as more travelers decide to take on the pilgrimage by foot, motivated by self-discovery and *iyashi* (Higasa & Kuroda, 2011). Therefore, the previous observations on the interaction between Japanese participants and locals are certainly not applicable to all circumstances and should be taken in context.

Finally, literature on pilgrimage tourism has pointed out how visitors place importance on the interactions with others during their travel. Okamoto (2012), in his studies in Santiago de Compostela, noticed that pilgrims, instead of making a priority to reach the end of the pilgrimage, enjoyed the interactions with others that took place along the way. Therefore, reaching the sacred destination at the end of the pilgrimage was not the priority, but the travel experience itself. In a similar note, the Australian participants also appreciated the different interactions with the locals that were created in their travel.

7. 3. 3. Attribute “nature”

The attribute of “nature” played an important role for both nationalities. Starting with the Australians, they linked said attribute to the consequence of “experience something different from everyday life”, which in this case meant that they found the nature on the Kumano area to be different to the one in their home country.

> “I like being around nature and I'm interested to learn about it. I come from Australia and the environment is a lot different so we don't really have crystal-clear rivers and deep mountains. It's a lot different so I like seeing those differences, checking around and discovering anything” (Australian N15).

> “Well, the mountains are much higher than you usually see. Very tall trees, camphor trees I think. Unique kind of foliage, and fauna and flora. We saw some deer in Nara, but we haven't seen any of those kind of animals. So, it's great” (Australian N5).

This led mainly to the value of “understanding-learning”:

> “So can see lots of different parts of the world, make lots of memories, and know what the world looks like” (Australian N5).

> “I don't know if it is important but it is interesting because it just extends your experience. The world is a fascinating place; it has any variety of anything you want. I think if you don't experience other cultures in other parts of the world, you have a narrow view. One of the difficulties of people getting older is that it gets narrow because they get comfortable. They kind of narrow their focus on their own experience, while you are young and you travel that broads your view of the world. Whereas the problem with older people is that if they don’t travel and experience other cultures, they tend to keep narrowing their focus. It's not something you do consciously in the sense that people choose to do it, but it is what happens People get more fearful because they are not physically as capable. All these things creep up on you with age” (Australian N8).

The consequence “experience something different from everyday life” was also related to the value of “enjoyment”, as the participants found it fun and enjoyable to be able to experience a new environment:

> “It makes me feel good, I like to see it, I feel happy. It renews you. You're seeing new countryside, you're seeing new things, and you go… that is good, it's really good, even when you're getting bitten by flies” (Australian N9).

> “Well, because then in my life I'm very busy with my family and what I do in my daily basis. So When I see nature, it opens my world a bit more, you know? You see a different perspective; it gives me a different perspective in life I believe very much in hearing, in seeing… it all affects the way one's wellbeing is: mental health, physical health. And as you grow older, you know, being the age I am, you are getting close not only to middle age, but getting close as being a senior citizen in a way. So I think as you grow older, you decide what you would really like out of life, what makes you happy, what makes you feel satisfy with being a person in this world. So you know nature gives me a lot of that too” (Australian N2).

“Nature” also led to the consequence of “experience nature”, meaning that the participants appreciated the attribute as an opportunity to be in contact with natural phenomena such as rivers

and mountains. Such consequence led to two different values. Firstly, they mentioned the value of "relaxation-refresh":

> "I feel more relaxed; I guess slowing down. Life is so fast-paced and stressful, you have anxieties, depression and all these things. By coming to a natural environment, it's quiet and your senses are filled with natural smells and sounds. Slows down your brain a bit so you feel more normal, more relaxed and you can recharge, whatever that means" (Australian N14).

> "Oh, I enjoy seeing nature. Makes me feel peaceful. I live and work in a city, and the nature or the outdoors, the forests gives me some pleasure, makes me feel happier, calmer" (Australian N18).

> "Why do I like it? I feel very calm in nature. I'm attracted to the beauty of nature. It is my go-to place for relaxation" (Australian N19).

> "We just do bush-walking and we live in a kind of mountainous natural region in Australia. It just makes you feel good, peaceful and recharge. It's nice to be out. And I like seeing the wildlife as well. We really like birds so we stop and see the birds, and what animals digging holes or pooing, you know (laughs)" (Australian N13).

Finally, the Australian participants also mentioned that experiencing a natural setting led them to the value of "meaningful experience":

> "Yes, I feel connected to the wholeness of life in all its forms, including rocks, trees, spirits of earth and sky. I don't feel like that at the beach" (Australian N11).

> "Because you know, living in a big city, it helps me get in touch with myself and my inner nature. And grounds me, to know that some places on the Earth that are unspoiled. That as human beings we haven't infected it completely" (Australian N20)

> "You can go anywhere to have *shinrin'yoku* (forest bathing) but if you come to an area where there is a strong vibration because many people have been here before, then you would hope you have a deeper experience" (Australian N1)

For the Japanese visitors, the attribute of "nature" played a central role, as it had by far the most number of links, as it can be observed in the HVM.

The value of "Relaxation-refresh" was central to the Japanese visitors in relation to nature and, to a lesser extent, to "history and culture". The attribute of nature was highly connected to the consequence of being in a place different from everyday life. In this regard, the Japanese participants frequently mentioned how being in a place filled with nature such as the Nakahechi trail was very different from everyday life, which was negatively described as busy urban settings, lacking of green areas.

> "I like nature because it is different from the daily life in the city" (Japanese N15).

"Talking about going traveling, I like the countryside (*inaka*). If I go to the city, the culture might be interesting but in Japan there is almost no green. So if I go to the countryside, I can maybe see a different setting or characteristic" (Japanese N18).

"Well… I'm a bit busy every day because of work and I live in a pretty central area of Osaka" (Japanese N17).

"I wasn't born in Tokyo. I'm from Shizuoka prefecture, where Mount Fuji is. That's where I was born. In those times, it wasn't as much nature as here (Kumano) but there was the sea and the mountains. I was raised in that kind of natural place. Nowadays I became an adult and live in Tokyo, but there are times that I miss it" (Japanese N20).

"About nature… I came from Osaka but I work in Tokyo. Tokyo is a big city as well. So it is convenient but I cannot relax. When I came here (to Kumano Kodo) and walked in the mountain trail, the air was nice and the green was beautiful, isn't it? I can also see the sea" (Japanese N9).

"Well, (nature is important) because I live in the city. Naturally, when I take some distance from my workplace, I can hear the sound of the wind and the voice of the mountain. I can be away from everyday life" (Japanese N14).

By being in a natural place, so different from their daily lives, the Japanese strongly emphasized that this led them to relax and refresh.

"The reason is because I can refresh from my busy work. I can reset" (Japanese N15).

"By being in nature, I have the feeling that I want to relax and be healed (*iyasaretai*)" (Japanese N20).

"I can relax and, by looking at beautiful things, I can refresh my mood. That is why I like nature" (Japanese N9).

"Why it is important? The first objective is because it relaxes my heart" (Japanese N20).

"I also hike but by being in contact with mountains and rivers, I feel refreshed" (Japanese N13).

In this regard, previous academic research has mentioned the therapeutic benefits of natural areas for human beings. Velarde, Fry and Tveit (2007) have compared the health effects of viewing landscapes in previous studies, and found that natural settings have a stronger positive effect, while in comparison, urban landscapes had lesser positives effects or negative ones. However, because previous studies merely divide landscapes between urban and natural, the lack of subcategories in this two broad categories make the results less clear. Ulrich (1981) discovered that showing slides with natural settings, particularly if they included water, had beneficial psychological effects on participants when compared to slides containing urban settings. In particular, exposure to slides containing vegetation or water had positive effects on emotions such as sadness and fear arousal. Ryan et al (2010) found in their study a positive relation between being outdoors and subjective

vitality, an important element of wellbeing and physical health. Finlay, Franke, McKay and Sims-Gould (2015) investigated the effects of green (vegetation) and blue (water) sceneries on older adults and found that these environments have a positive effect on their physical, mental and social health. Leisure trips have also been associated to relaxation. Chun-Chu, Petrick and Shahvali (2016) found that even short leisure travels can help people to recover from stress. Finally, Japanese studies have also demonstrated a positive relation between natural environment and health. Ueda, Machida, Kawamura and Koseki (2013) conducted a study on mood alteration during a forest walking program. Their results showed that found out that the natural environment had a positive effect on the participants' mood. However, they also pointed that both the walking course's characteristics and the guides directing the attention of the participants enhanced the natural setting effects.

The importance of this value also highlights the relationship between relaxation and sacred sites in Japan. While relaxation was certainly mentioned by both nationalities, it was a central aspect for the Japanese visitors. As previous studies show (Progano & Kato, 2018), the presence of wellness-related spiritual tourism elements is strong in Kumano Kodo, and can be principally seen in the concept of *iyashi* and the contemporary definition of *yomigaeri*. *Iyashi* in particular is employed to refer to a wide range of healing types, from alluding to empirical-proven health results of walking to more subjective concepts like relaxation and self-reflection. *Yomigaeri*, on the other side, is portrayed as a holistic healing, unrelated to pseudo-scientific physical healings present in the new age tourism sub-category. Norman (2012) has also noted that the spiritual tourist seeks wellness-related healing experiences. Lopez et al (2017) have also noticed in Santiago de Compostela wellness-related elements in tourists' motivations. Also, wellness tourism includes themes and practices that have a religious background (Stausberg, 2011), which echoes the wellness tourism developments around the Yunomine hotspring. As mentioned before, Tanabe city currently conducts wellness-related activities along the pilgrimage sites, utilizing both its geographical and cultural features. Therefore, it can be seen that elements of spirituality and wellness are essential for the Japanese participants when visiting Kumano Kodo.

The Japanese also mentioned the consequence the "nature" of the area being "similar to my hometown". This consequence naturally led to the value of "nostalgia".

> "I am in my fifties now, but this is perhaps like the scenery I saw during my teens (…) I feel I can go back to the environment where I was raised. Regarding Hyogo prefecture, it does have mountains, but it has buildings and has been urbanized. The cafeterias have been getting pretty shapes, but my parents are old and many of the people working are elderly. So I feel I can go back to myself. Take back my years. It is a nostalgic (*natsukashii*) feeling" (Japanese N8).

> "My relatives had, when I was little, many crop fields so I can say I was raised in such places. I came to see this kind of places and I have the feeling I can relax in places that I know. The sound of the wind moving the trees, the smells…I have an incredible impression of being healed. By just looking at nature, I can remember those things and relax" (Japanese N25).

Previous studies on the Japanese countryside have noticed nostalgic elements in its contemporary conception as well. The countryside in Japanese can be called *inaka*, but this word may contain negative connotations of backwardness in some contexts. A more positive word is *furusato*, which evokes bucolic images of traditional farmhouses among rivers and mountains. It also connotes a desirable lifestyle characterized by rustic simplicity (*soboku*) and warm nostalgia (Robertson, 1995). This romanticized view of the Japanese countryside is relatively recent. According to Ishii (2007), after the Second World War, Japanese society regarded its rural areas as vestiges of outdated feudalism and backwardness, as well as supporters of the nationalism that led to the eventual Japanese defeat. However, during the 1960s and 1970s, rural areas were revaluated in a more positive light. This change was prompted by different causes. For example, the evolution of media outlets connected urbanites to their previous hometowns in the countryside. Another reason was a reaction towards the rapid modernization and economic growth that Japan experienced during the 1960s. Amid this tremendous development, it was noticed that traditions and nature (elements supported by the countryside lifestyle) were beginning to vanish. Therefore, the disappearance of the *furusato* was seen as the disappearance of the traditional culture and landscape of Japan. In consequence, the conservation of rural areas was equaled to the conservation of Japanese culture, endangered by the advances of modernization. Finally, tourism campaigns also played a role in the revalorization of the *furusato*, which were mainly carried out by railways companies (Robertson, 1995). To resume, it is observed that the Japanese countryside is characterized by nostalgia. Previous research has analyzed the role of nostalgia in tourism, although there are still few studies on this area (Kim, 2005). In particular, Nakai (2011) has noticed elements of nostalgia in contemporary Kumano Kodo. Religious traditions were re-signified as a nostalgic 'lost past' in which humans and nature were deeply connected. This is similar to the nostalgia towards the *furusato* because it also contrasts an idealized, lost past to contemporary, urban society. Finally, it is important to remark that, while they felt nostalgia towards the landscape they saw in Kumano, they do not have any actual genealogical roots in the area. Thus, they do not qualify to be legacy tourists, which are visitors who travel because of genealogical reasons, such as searching for information on or feel connected to their ancestors (McCain & Ray, 2003).

7. 3. 4. Attribute "spirituality"

Regarding the attribute of "spirituality", as the Australian visitors were visiting a pilgrimage site that was not connected at all to their own culture, unsurprisingly they did not mention any specifics about the traditional faith and practices of Kumano Kodo. Instead, they talked about spirituality in personal terms. This is line with the past research that emphasizes that contemporary spirituality focuses more on the individual's private faith than traditional religious narratives (Hanegraaff, 2000; Houtman & Manscini, 2002; Mori, 2005; Stausberg, 2011; Yamanaka, 2012; Okamoto, 2015; Olsen, 2015), as mentioned in Chapter 4. "Spirituality", when mentioned, led to the value of "being in the present moment".

> "Being somewhere where I feel closer to the divine. Reminds me what is important in life. It connects me to something bigger. It something my partner and I share. It's a deeply nourishing

feeling, spending five days regularly connecting through the temples but also the effort. This would not be same without the walking. You have to walk with some effort for it to be special and for you to connect. Something like the effort tires the material brain, of the material world. It's through the effort you become focused on being in the moment. So being in the moment and connecting with everything that it means being in the moment" (Australian N12).

"Again, in my life I always had something of spirituality because I was born a Catholic but for many, many years I have been involved with yoga, meditation. You know, being in the present moment. So walking trails like pilgrimage is really not only my wandering, my spirituality but where it takes me I don't know… It's just getting to being in the present moment, that's really important to my spirituality" (Australian N2).

"I'm interested in the Shinto religion because I like that it exonerates some aspects of nature and different animals. I think that's really interesting. I can connect with that a little bit. And because I enjoy thinking about spirituality and that other people have felt this spirituality in this place as well, so it's a connection to something greater than ourselves. This is a place that people come to think about that. That's a pretty special feeling" (Australian N16).

"Because I'm very passionate about trying to deepen my spiritual life and I would like to be a good meditator, but I'm terrible at sitting down and for 45 minutes and breathing. But I'm very good at walking and living in the present. And so walking ticks all the boxes of being in the present, being in nature and contemplating outside of oneself" (Australian N23).

In turn, the Japanese who said that spirituality was an important attribute did mention religious-specific words such as 'gods' (*kamisama*) or 'Buddhas'. However, there were no mentions of Kumano-specific deities. Because of this, it was directly linked to the value of "connection with the Divine".

"It is very important (being together with the gods and Buddhas). For me, the gods and Buddhas are important" (Japanese N22).

"Maybe I want the gods to come, that they are able to come. That in this nature the gods could come to me… it really relaxes me. I want to receive such power". (Japanese N5).

"I have the feeling that I want to depend on someone. Not on an individual, but on the gods (*kamisama*). I believe that is very important for me as an individual" (Japanese N19).

"I didn't think about walking and climbing in Koyasan or Kumano Kodo. I came by car because I wanted to go to a place close to the gods (*kamisama*)" (Japanese N8)

When viewing the chains formed by Australian and Japanese participants from the attribute "spirituality", one can quickly notice that former viewed spirituality in general as a more personal, inwards experience, while the latter viewed it as a transcendent experience to reach a divine Other. The Japanese visitors had more mentions of traditional divine figures such as Buddhas but no clear

religions were mentioned. Nevertheless, spirituality as an attribute had a rather low importance for both sampled visitor groups, who did few mentions of it when compared to other elements in the HVMs. In particular, the traditional beliefs of Kumano Kodo, such as their deities or related traditions, were not mentioned. This is in line with the characteristics of contemporary spirituality discussed before, which prioritize individual beliefs over traditional narratives sanctioned by religious institutions (Hanegraaff, 2000; Houtman & Manscini, 2002; Heelas, 2006; Okamoto, 2015;).

None of the visitors expressed any particular strong desire to reach the end of the Nakahechi trail and pray at the Kumano Hongu Taisha. This is in line with previous studies that mention that the visitors to pilgrimage sites are more interested in the journey experience itself than its end goal (Okamoto, 2012) and in the sense of place that the trail provides them. In relation to this, the participants do not mention elements associated with ritual behaviors, such as praying. There may be several reasons to this, related to contemporary spirituality itself and to the fieldwork location. About the first point, because visitors no longer strictly follow traditional religious behavior due to the contemporary spiritual context mentioned in Chapter 4, they may behave and experience sacred sites in different ways. Because of this, praying may not have a predominant position for the visitors, who may choose other types of behavior. By looking at the data obtained, visitors seemed to experience spirituality by the sense of place that the Kumano area brought to them, as the place gave them a sense of awe and wonder. Physical activities such as walking in natural areas were given a spiritual dimension by some participants as well. Regarding the fieldwork location, Takahara is located relatively close to the start of the trail and does not contain any of the main shrines, although one of the trail's small local shrine is located. Therefore, the participants may not be motivated to pray in Takahara and thus praying may not be prominent in this area. Perhaps if the fieldwork location contained important shrines, such as the Kumano Hongu Taisha at the end of the Nakahechi trail, elements related to praying would have been mentioned.

7. 3. 5. Attribute "countryside"

Naturally, because the Australians were not born and raised in Japan, they did not mention nostalgic elements. However, they did show an interest in the attribute of "countryside", that connected them to the consequence of "experience the rural side of Japan", which finally led to the value of "understanding-learning". The participants mentioned how they had previously visited the main urban destinations of Japan, such as Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto, but felt that their tourism experience was incomplete. This pushed them to travel to rural areas, like Kumano Kodo, to see the 'whole' Japan.

> "It makes it more whole, like you are seeing Japan in its glory, the business in the cities and the tourists flocking to the big sights. And now, we didn't see anyone yesterday while we were walking. So you are getting a different sense of Japan" (Australian N4).

> "I wanted to see Japan. I have seen is no Tokyo. You don't know much about the countryside of Japan. So I wanted to explore and see it. And how people live too, in these small villages. The contrast from Tokyo. It is very different" (Australian N17).

"So I wanted to come here experience the countryside and the mountains. Also, I wanted to stay in a more traditional-style accommodation, a *ryokan* or a *minshuku* (a type of Japanese accommodations) instead of hotels all the time. That would be more traditional. A special hospitality. And just wanted to see the countryside, the rural lifestyle of the Japanese" (Australian N14).

"You visit a country and you can stop in hotels, but I don't think you really understand the culture until you are. We also catch the bus in big cities rather than if you are doing tours and hopping in to the bus and they go from point A to point B to point C. You usually don't learn much. But if you catch public transport, you have to work out how to get around and you see so much more. You see how it worlds, you see people on trains. You see the culture, whereas if you are in your own bus you don't see any of that. For us, it is important to try to understand the country along the way" (Australian N3).

Interestingly enough, while the Australian visitors did not mention any nostalgic elements, their views reflected to a certain degree the ones made by the Japanese counterparts, as they both perceived the countryside in a positive light and also as a contrast to urban settlements. They mentioned as well the belief that the Japanese countryside was more traditional than the cities:

"I guess because we see tons of Japanese people in the cities do in movies. Everybody seems to know about that and all the Australians visit Tokyo, go to the Pachinko arcades or eat all the amazing food in the city. Never really to come out and see the real, traditional… you know, people growing food or living quietly" (Australian N13).

"Yeah, I think sometimes that really dense urban centers like Kyoto or Tokyo you can be a little more removed from local experiences. And also, to a certain extent, it is little more homogenized worldwide, so some of the urban experiences here are similar to ones I had at home or England. Whereas sometimes more rural communities can be a little more traditional, they can sometimes feel a bit friendlier and is easy to have interactions. I enjoy seeing rural practices that are different to home" (Australian N16).

7. 3. 6. Attribute "World Heritage registration"

The Japanese visitors were interested in the attribute of "World Heritage registration", which means that they were interested in Kumano Kodo because they heard it was registered as a UNESCO site. This led to two consequences for them, "curiosity" and "passing culture to future generations", which led to "pride" and "understanding-learning" respectively. Regarding the first chain, the Japanese visitors mentioned that they heard about the UNESCO designation that Kumano Kodo received, which sparkled in them curiosity about the site.

"I think it is important. I think it must be an incredible site if it got chosen as World Heritage. It became famous so I wanted to go" (Japanese N10).

"Why it got chosen as World Heritage? There must be many reasons for it. Many people come to see it and it has existed from ancient times. It is because of many reasons that Kumano Kodo to have lasted and was looked after. I want to see these reasons with my own eyes". (Japanese N22).

"Well, the world Heritage… Sometimes I saw it on television and I wanted to come and see Kumano Kodo" (Japanese N17).

"Well, naturally because it has a World Heritage Site" (Japanese N20).

This curiosity about Kumano Kodo led them to come in contact with the site feel proud of the worldwide appreciation that a Japanese place got, even though they were not part of the local community who actually lives in Kumano.

"Certainly not only Kumano Kodo, but other World Heritage Sites… It makes me feel proud when things and places in Japan become World Heritage Sites. I feel good as a Japanese. But I don't have knowledge on them so I want to go and learn about them" (Japanese N20).

"I suppose it is important (to go to a World Heritage Site). I wanted to go because I thought that if an area was selected, it should be a fantastic place. I wanted to go because it became famous. If a place inside Japan was selected as a World Heritage Site, it means it was judged as an amazing place. I was happy that Japan was selected. I live in Japan so naturally I wanted to go" (Japanese N10).

The second consequence that was linked to "World Heritage designation" was the consequence of "pass culture to future generations". Here, the Japanese visitors believed that this was a chance for learning and teaching others about the site, in particular to children.

"Because I'm going, it would be good for me to study about the place. Probably the people around there can talk and teach me about it, don't you think? I want to talk (about it) to people who have never been there, particularly children" (Japanese N20).

In relation to this, the Japanese visitors appear to be more attracted to WHS when compared to their Australian counterparts, who did not mention this attribute. As it was mentioned before, in the 2000s, Japan experienced a nationwide 'World Heritage boom'. Local communities, such as Tanabe city, realized the potential of tourism development for economy revitalization through a UNESCO designation (McGuire, 2013; Matsui, 2014). Perhaps due to this social phenomena, WHS registration were more emphasized by domestic visitors. Australians, on the other hand, did not mention the WHS designation as an important attribute for them, although it is believed that they were mostly aware of it, as it is printed in different media. The pride that the Japanese visitors mentioned towards the WHS designation shows the link between heritage and national belonging, which have been discussed in previous studies (Pretes, 2003; Park, 2010).

7. 3. 7. Attribute "hiking-walking"

The attribute “hiking-walking” was almost not mentioned by the Japanese sample, being only mentioned once in two separate ladders and thus not appearing in the HVM. As it was discussed before, the Japanese do not have long stays for a variety of reasons and thus rely on automobiles to quickly travel to and around Kumano. Therefore, it is only logical that they tend to avoid slower ways of travel, such as walking, as their travel patterns in Kumano are different to those of their Australian counterparts. On the other hand, the Australian visitors did several mentions of this attribute and related it to different consequences and values, thus making it an important part of their tourism experience. Previous studies (Murray & Graham, 1997; Lois-Gonzalez & Santos, 2016; Kato & Progano, 2017) have mentioned the importance of motivations related to physical activity, such as walking and cycling, in contemporary pilgrimage.

As it can be seen in the HVM, “hiking-walking” is connected to three consequences: “challenge myself”, “being fit” and “experience nature”. The first element, “challenge myself”, is connected to the value of “achievement”: the Australian participants mentioned the sense of achievement they obtained by completing walks.

> “Well, I like walking because it is good exercise. Gives me a certain satisfaction that I accomplished something” (Australian N17).

> “I like the sense of accomplishment, there is a bit of an achievement component in it. That you got from A to B and you covered it on foot, I like that”. (Australian N19).

> “I don't know whether it is perhaps because it is hard to do. Because if it was really easy to do, I wouldn't get anything out of it. Is extending yourself” (Australian N7).

> “It makes me feel tired, but it is an achievement. It is not necessarily pleasant doing it. Climbing over the rocks and up the path and all that sort of stuff is not what I would call appealing in itself. But having completed in a sense, it's having a goal and achieving that goal. That's the satisfaction” (Australian N8).

In comparison, it can be observed that the Japanese visitors have a more passive and contemplating attitude towards the Nakahechi trail, as they do not see it as a place for outdoor activities. Reasons for this may be related to contextual reasons related to travel patterns discussed before.

“Being fit” was related to the value of “health”, as the visitors believed that hiking in outdoor areas would help them keep their bodies in good conditions and thus maintain good health.

> “It keeps me fit. That's about it. And healthy, yeah” (Australian N14).

> “I like seeing nature and also it helps me to try stay healthy because I eat too much food so I need to exercise and walking is a gentle form of exercise that allows me to see a lot of nature”. (Australian N18).

"I feel it makes me feel better too, it makes me feel well-being. It makes life more enjoyable" (Australian N16).

"I like seeing nature and also it helps me to try stay healthy because I eat too much food so I need to exercise and walking is a gentle form of exercise that allows me to see a lot of nature" (Australian N18).

Finally, because the walking took place in an outdoor setting such as the mountainous Nakahechi trail, the exercise gave the participants the opportunity to be in contact with nature, thus leading to the consequence "experience nature". This led to two different values, "relaxation-refresh" and "meaningful experience", which have been already described.

As it can be seen in the HVM, "hiking-walking" is connected indirectly to four different values, making it an important element in the Australian participants' travel experience. This may have been because of the characteristic that slow mobilities, such as walking, possess and how they influence people. For example, the value of "achievement" that slow mobilities produce has been linked to the close relationship that a person develops with the place's topography and weather conditions, as well as its own exhaustion (Dickinson et al, 2011). This type of close connection with the environment would not be generated by the use of automobiles and other forms of fast traveling. This may also explain the smaller number of elements in the Japanese HVM: as domestic tourists tend to use automobiles to travel to and in the destination, as well as having shorter stays, they may not have close engagement with the destination, leading to a lesser number of elements.

7. 3. 8. Attribute "food"

The final attribute, "food", was mentioned by both nationalities, but only appears in the Australian HVM because of the chosen cut-off value. In the interviews, the Australian participants linked this attribute mainly to the consequence of "freshness", meaning they thought that the food served in the area was distinctively fresh, which ultimately led to the value of "health", as fresh food was seen as good for the general wellbeing:

"It's simple, fresh and healthy" (Australian N18).

"I think that Japan is known for the freshness of its food" (Australian N17).

"Very clean food. It's very tasty food, I prefer savory food to sweet one" (Australian N11).

"It's fresh, and yummy. Gorgeous colors. It's art, every time you are presented with food it's art" (Australian N23).

"Food" also led to the consequence of "food taste", as the food served was regarded as having a good taste, which led to the value of "enjoyment":

"I love that, yes. Its, salty and bland. Not so much sour. You can tell that they paid attention to the balance of flavors that there are in one meal. That's very nice" (Australian N11).

> “The taste, the clean taste, it makes me feel happy that I'm eating healthily. The simple food, if it tastes good as it does in Japan, I feel it is better for me so it makes me feel happier because I'm eating really well. The quality in Japan is very good. They pride themselves of it and is true that the quality is second to none” (Australian N18).

In sum, it can be said that Japanese food was an appealing destination attribute for the Australian participants. This is, however, no surprise when we compare with official data about international tourists and food. According to the JTA (2017), in 2016 the “Food and Beverage” sector was the third most purchased by international tourists, who spent an average of 31,508 yens per person. Previous studies on perceptions on Japanese cuisine have showed similar data. Jang, Ha and Silkes (2009), in their comparative study on the perceived attributes of Asian cuisines, found that Americans described Japanese food as healthy and fresh, a similar result to the ones found in the present research. However, tourism in the Nakahechi trail cannot be classified as food tourism, as its overall importance is not as great as other attributes shown.

Also, it is important to observe that the Bureau has carried out different initiatives to facilitate the foreign visitors’ experience with Japanese food, which may have contributed to its acceptance. One of them is the ‘food request’ service, where visitors can customize their food at accommodations according to their tastes. While this may sound simple, during the fieldwork at the guesthouse in Takahara, it was observed that requests are varied: from specific allergies (such as shrimp) to veganism, which can entail very diverse requests. For example, some visitors would not eat any kind of animal products, while others would accept eating only fish and vegetables. Others would eat eggs and dairy, while others would not. Careful precautions had to be taken, as soups or condiments may utilize animal or fish products as well. While being able to request specific foods is certainly a relief for international visitors, there were cases that caused some confusion among the staff, especially in days with big numbers of guests who made different requests. It was also sometimes difficult for the staff to provide alternative food, as the accommodation did not have a wide arrange of foods that, for example, a large hotel could have. In conclusion, while the international visitors were keen on trying Japanese food, they still required a degree of customization and extra work from the accommodation. Japanese guests, on the other hand, rarely had any requests regarding food.

By observing both HVM maps, it is interesting to mention that Australians tended to underline physical health, as seen from their emphasis on the chains “hiking-walking” - “being fit” - “health” and “food” - “freshness” - “health”. On the other hand, Japanese participants valued mental relaxation as seen from their central chain of “nature” - “experience something different from everyday life” - “relaxation-refresh” and the smaller chain of “history and culture” - “experience a historical site” - “relaxation-refresh”. Still, both of them recognized that their travel was in part motivated by health. The relationship between travel and health has been studied in detail by previous researchers. Traveling for health purposes has been a staple in human travel for centuries (Connell, 2011; Hall, 2013), with Japan being no exception (Merry, 2013). Naturally, the relationships between health and contemporary tourism are rather complex, and can reach a wide range of

treatments, from transplant tourism to beauty treatments. Using Hall's (2013) categorization, it can be stated that, in regards to health and tourism, Kumano Kodo is suited for wellness tourism, as its visitors are interested in maintaining their general health through non-medical methods (such as hiking, visiting natural areas and food) and for pampering (as in food).

7. 4. Conclusion

This section showed the discussions based on data from public bodies and previous academic studies. While the self-administered questionnaires were not the main objective of the research, the brief discussion on them helped to understand the socio-demographic background of the participants. Both nationalities shared similarities regarding age range, gender, education level and travel party size but showed differences particularly in their length of stay, as the Australian participants tended to have longer stays than their Japanese counterparts do.

The utilization of means-end for the present research proved to be a useful tool to analyze the diversity found in pilgrimage tourism through national segmentation by sampling both nationalities that traveled the Nakahechi trail, offering rich descriptive data in the participants' own words and the possibility of understanding the relationship between attributes, consequences and values through soft laddering. The HVMs for Australians and Japanese showed a number of differences between each other. One of the first noticeable differences is the number of elements present in the HVMs: the Japanese tended to concentrate on fewer elements, while the Australians showed a diverse range of elements. When discussing each of the attributes, it was clear that the Australians and Japanese participants showed differences among them. Although they mentioned at times the same elements, the way they understood them was not the same. For example, both showed appreciation towards the element "nature" as a way to "experience something different from everyday life". However, both national groups understood this in a different way. For the Japanese, living busy lives in big urban centers, nature helped them as a way to escape from the toils of daily life and thus be able to slow down and relax, connecting to the value of "relaxation - refresh". On the other hand, the Australians understood "nature" as a way to "experience something different from everyday life" in a different sense: for them, the natural environment found in Kumano was different from the one they experienced in their homeland. This connected them to the values of "enjoyment" and "understanding-learning".

The absence or inclusion of certain attributes also contributed to understand the differences between both nationalities. As it was mentioned, the Australians showed a greater appreciation towards the local community in Kumano Kodo, while the Japanese made few mentions of them and thus not appearing in the HVM. The Japanese mentioned the attribute of "World Heritage designation", showing the importance of the WHS brand in Japanese heritage tourism, while the Australians did not mention this attribute at all.

In conclusion, the construction of the HVMs and their following discussion has helped to obtain qualitative data that has shown the differences and similarities between two national segments that engage in pilgrimage tourism in Asia. Also, it can be observed that traditional faith played a small

role for both nationalities, while contemporary spirituality played a bigger role, following previous discussions in Chapter 4. However, “spirituality” as an element was still not one the of the most mentioned attributes. Instead, elements such as walking, nature, relaxation, understanding about different cultures or achievement were more prevalent. This shows that indeed visitors in pilgrimage site have a diverse range of motivations to travel to the destinations, beyond a simple continuum between contemporary spirituality and traditional religion. It is also clear that this diversification is amplified when the nationality of the visitors is taken into consideration, as their respective HVMs show differences in them regarding the presence or absence of certain elements, how much certain elements are mentioned and the links between elements. These observations have implications for both academia and policy-makers, which are explained in the following chapter.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

8. 1. Introduction

As the final chapter of the study, the main findings in the Discussion chapter are summarized to put forward the study's conclusions, acknowledging research limitations in the scope of the study. Next, implications for both future research on the area and policy-makers related to pilgrimage tourism, in particular developed in regional areas are presented. Finally, final remarks are offered to conclude the research.

8. 2. Summary of research findings

This research was designed to explore the diversity of visitors in contemporary pilgrimage tourism, by adopting a national segmentation approach that includes both international and domestic tourists. The research findings demonstrated that, in the current context of individualized spirituality discussed in Chapter 4, international and domestic tourists show differences in their motivation and behavior. Pilgrimage sites have been increasingly becoming places with multi-layered meanings and behaviors according to the different nationalities that visit them. Now that sacred sites' place and narrative have become separated in contemporary society (Okamoto, 2015), traditional interpretations and mandates play a smaller and non-privileged role in pilgrimage. International visitors now assiduously travel to sacred sites not related to their own cultural spheres, without this implying a formal conversion to a particular faith (Olsen, 2015). In the present research, for example, the Australian visitors did not mention any intention of converting to the Kumano faith. In this context, inbound tourists contribute to the sacred site by bringing with them new meanings, behaviors and values, even though they may have few or no cultural links to it. In this research in particular, Australian visitors attached numerous values to the Nakahechi trail, describing it, for example, as a place for multi-cultural learning and understanding, while the domestic tourists evoked feelings of relaxation among a demanding urban lifestyle. None of these interpretations strictly follows the traditional faith of the Kumano region, closely related to Shugendo, but shows that still pilgrimage sites play a significant role in contemporary society. Rather than Shugendo, elements of contemporary spirituality did show in the visitors' statements, particularly *iyashi.* However, and interestingly enough, they did not are the most numerous aspects. For example, the attribute "spirituality", even understood as in its contemporary individualized form, is not among the most mentioned one by any of the two sampled nationalities.

This suggests that the diversification process in sacred sites (such as pilgrimage locations), while initiated by the secularization process mentioned in Chapter 4, goes beyond a simple continuum of contemporary spirituality and traditional religion, and incorporates a diverse range of elements related to leisure, sports, intercultural exchange, nostalgia, escapism and relaxation, among others, as the HVMs show. Thus, while contemporary spiritualty does play a role, research on pilgrimage sites cannot be simply reduced to it, which opens the field for numerous opportunities in both tourism development and academic investigation in this type of destinations. During this study, the

overcoming of challenge, relaxation from daily life, nostalgia and inter-cultural learning emerged as themes found in pilgrimage tourism. In particular, when international tourists are analyzed, a wide range of themes may emerge when they bring their cultural and personal background such as needs, interests and expectations to a pilgrimage site, increasing diversification.

The study also demonstrated the importance and applicability of visitor segmentation by nationality for the study of pilgrimage tourism, by taking Kumano Kodo's Nakahechi trail in Tanabe city as an example. This conclusion is supported by previous studies that utilized national segmentation (Reisinger & Turner, 1998; Chen, 2000; You et al, 2000; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Rosenbaum & Spears, 2005; Dejbakhsh et al, 2011; Girish & Ryan, 2011; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2016) and also by academic bibliography on spirituality in contemporary society (Hanegraaff, 2000; Houtman & Manscini, 2002; Heelas, 2006; Okamoto, 2015), which established the diversification of visitors in pilgrimage sites. In a context of individualized spirituality, as pilgrimage sites are increasingly becoming international destinations, tourists from diverse nationalities were found to exhibit differences. These differences are related to context and should not be reduced to essentialist statements. For example, Japanese visitors were mentioned to have closer relationships with the locals in Shikoku Henro than in Kumano Kodo due to a series of factors discussed before. Therefore, while the results of the present study do show visitor diversification in pilgrimage sites through national segmentation, the specific profile of each nationality naturally varies according to context. For example, the Japanese visitors to Santiago de Compostela may show many difference to the sampled tourists in the present study. However, this does not negate the fact that visitors from diverse nationalities show a noticeable degree of difference, although context should be still taken into account.

For uncovering and analyzing the differences and similarities among visitors, means-end provided a deeper understanding than questionnaire-based research. For example, while nature was important for both nationalities, the following consequences and values differed in certain aspects. As sacred sites continue to grow in popularity, the importance of detailed profile information on international tourists will be vital. Thus, the methodological approach for this research, while demanding in-field, provided detailed data on the subject. In sum, a means-end approach proved to be a useful methodological tool for studying differences among national groups, as previous studies showed (Mattila, 1999; Dibley & Baker, 2001; Watkins & Gnoth, 2011; Lin et al, 2013).

Also, this research further demonstrated the applicability of qualitative-based research in outdoor destinations, such as the mountainous pilgrimage trails of Nakahechi. While this type of research is difficult to conduct in said settings, local knowledge on the studied area and connections with local stakeholders proved useful to overcome these obstacles. Local knowledge on the site helped the researcher to select an appropriate nodal point where the selected nationalities were likely to be. The assistance of the guesthouse where the researcher stayed provided not only a place where Australian and Japanese visitors gathered, but also offered a comfortable place to conduct the interviews. The guesthouse also provided a place where the researcher could naturally approach potential participants without disrupting their travel routines, as they were mostly relaxing at the facilities and open to interact with the staff.

Finally, through these results, the research has accomplished to contribute to the research gaps mentioned in Chapters 1 and 4. These gaps included a lack of studies that utilize national segmentation in pilgrimage sites, despite previous studies demonstrating the importance of nationality, and the presence of inbound visitors in pilgrimage sites; as well as a lack of studies about Asian pilgrimage sites, despite their importance in contemporary tourism. By contributing to the lack of research on these particular areas, this research makes a clear academic contribution to the field of tourism studies, in particular to pilgrimage tourism in Asia-Pacific. It has also contributed to the general understanding of visitor motivations in contemporary pilgrimage, showing that they go beyond a continuum of contemporary spirituality and traditional religion. However, as it is natural, there are limitations to the present study that should be addressed.

8. 3. Research limitations

Due to time constrains and the geographic characteristics of Kumano Kodo, it was possible to only focus on two numerous nationalities for this research. As stated before, the study set out to analyze domestic and international tourists, and for this, Australian and Japanese were selected because they were the most ones according to tourism statistics. However, the foreigners traveling the Nakahechi trail in Tanabe city come from a wide range of countries such as United States, France and Spain, among others, who had to be left out of this study. It is also important to mention that, due to time constrains, the present research was only conducted in the Takahara community. Even though Takahara is an important point in the Nakahechi route, other important sites such as Chikatsuyu village (located roughly in the middle of the route) and Hongu town (located at the end) could provide different insights. Previous research has showed that pilgrims may change their attitudes towards their travel as they progress through the pilgrimage (Norman, 2009, Kim et al, 2016). During informal conversations, some of the participants mentioned this possibility to the researcher as well. Therefore, conducting research in different locations in the same pilgrimage trail may produce different findings. Finally, the sampled visitors consisted of people who stayed overnight and therefore, did not include one-day tourists, who constitute the majority of the tourists in Tanabe city.

Finally, the selection of means-end as an approach also limited some of the scope of the research, as any methodological approach has its limitations. In this case particularly, the cut-off value of 2 selected for the HVMs left out a number of MEC chains and elements. While these elements are present in the aggregate matrices, they are not included in the HVMs, and thus a discussion on them is not provided. Researchers could perhaps examine these elements in the future.

8. 4. Implications for future research

Future research could utilize the results of this research to conduct a quantitative study on a larger pool of tourists to further asses the validity of the present research's conclusions. As stated before, future research may be conducted on one-day visitors at the proximities of key tourism sites, such as Kumano Hongu Taisha. A study on one-day visitors would be of academic valuable as previous studies have shown that tourists with different length of stays in pilgrimage sites have different

visitor profiles (Rodriguez, Martinez-Roget & Gonzalez-Murias, 2018). However, conducting laddering interviews on one-day visitors poses some challenges for future researchers. As these visitors would not stay in accommodations, it would be imperative to secure a suitable place for interviews that is also relatively close to major tourism attractions such as Kumano Hongu Taisha. Participants may also have little spare time because of the very nature of their brief visit, and thus reject the interview proposal. In order to avoid these challenges, instead of conducting soft laddering, a methodological approach utilizing hard laddering, such as using paper and pencil, would be more suitable as it would reduce the time required from each participant and thus make them more willing to participate in the research. This approach would also relinquish the need for a suitable place to conduct interviews. Kim et al (2016) has conducted research on pilgrimage sites utilizing hard laddering, showing the applicability of means-end in this kind of scenarios. Therefore, future research may be conducted on one-day tourists in Nakahechi route by utilizing hard laddering.

Research on international and domestic tourists may as well be produced in other Asian pilgrimage sites and routes. As stated before, the Asia-Pacific region has become the second most visited region in the world (United Nations World Tourism Organization & Global Tourism Research Center, 2017), and has the greatest number of pilgrims and travelers for religious events for both international and domestic tourism (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2012). Therefore, research based on national segmentation carried out in the many sacred sites in Asia would provide a vast and interesting research field that would not only be useful for policy-makers, but also help to contribute to the number of academic research done on non-Western sites. There is tremendous potential for academic fieldwork in this study area in the Asia-Pacific region that is still untapped.

The importance of nature and its conservation in pilgrimage tourism would also be of importance for future research related to the environment and pilgrimage tourism. Both nationalities mentioned natural environment and its importance in different ways. Although the literature review showed few studies on the natural environment of the pilgrimage sites, there is potential for academic study in this area, not only regarding the protection of natural environment related to pilgrimage sites, but also regarding its relationship with visitors and locals and sustainable tourism. As it was stated previously, there is little research done on the relationship between environment, sustainable tourism and pilgrimage. However, previous research has stated how tourism development can bring environmental problems (McGuire, 2013; Kato & Progano, 2017) and conflicts with local traditions as the environment is altered to suit visitors' needs (Jimura, 2016). Future studies on these areas would be of great importance for both academic understanding of pilgrimage sites and their management. Lastly, in this research in particular, the potential for wellness-related tourism and nature in pilgrimage sites was clearly observed, especially for Japanese participants. The Bureau is already carrying out the utilization of the natural features of the area, along with its cultural heritage, as a wellness program. By looking at the HVMs, it is the opinion of the researcher that this program could be expanded to the international tourists as well, bringing new research opportunities on the way different nationalities understand and behave in a pilgrimage's natural environment.

As inbound tourism continues to expand in pilgrimage-related destinations, host-guest interactions would also yield an interesting subject to study. The present study's results already showed that the local community was perceived differently by both nationalities. However, it is important to understand that the present study's results only showed what the participants mentioned but not necessarily *do*. Further research employing participant observation or ethnography might shed light on these subjects. While the locals' religiosity was not an important factor in the present study, previous research (Terzidou et al, 2008) has showed that this is a factor of importance. Therefore, future studies should take into account the locals' religiosity when studying their perception and interaction with visitors. At the same time, the locals may perceive each national group differently, as it was previously stated (Progano, 2018b). As pilgrimage tourism continues to expand, studies about the community's views on tourists (or tourism in general) will be an important academic to study. This specific field remains largely understudied nowadays, so there is a great potential for future research. The locals may possibly perceive the tourists based on other factors, such as gender, age and length of stay, which can be researched in the future.

The variances in mobility between tourists of different nationalities visiting a pilgrimage site may be as well of interest for future research. Previous research has shown that spatial behavior varies according to nationality. As mentioned before, Dejbakhsh et al (2011) discovered differences according to nationality regarding travel spatial behavior in areas such as accommodation location, mode of transport, length, direction, type and pattern of movements. The present study also suggested that Japanese and Australian have different spatial behaviors: Australians tended to travel by foot in the Nakahechi trail and had longer stays, while the Japanese showed less inclination to walking and mentioned using automobiles, as well as having shorter stays overall, which could be attributed to holiday patterns. These results may motivate future studies in mobility and nationality in pilgrimage tourism.

Future studies may also take as a reference the current fieldwork approach in an outdoor setting. Conducting qualitative studies often demands time from the participants, which is often scarcely available because participants are often 'on the move' while traversing pilgrimage routes. Also, securing an appropriate place for conducting interviews is often a challenge in outdoor settings, where infrastructure is limited. Finally, locating participants in outdoor settings is a difficult task considering the large area where they move. These challenges, which also have been discussed in previous research (Wall-Reinius, 2011), were tackled in this research by staying as a volunteer in a popular guesthouse located in one of the pilgrimage route's node points. Although the guesthouse was welcoming of any volunteer staff because of the increasing number of guests, the acceptance of the researcher was certainly facilitated by previous networking during past research and university activities, as well as being recommended by academic staff who had a long relationship with the guesthouse's owner. Therefore, future qualitative research conducted in pilgrimage routes may take into account the researcher's experience regarding the importance of networking and its role in facilitating research in challenging environments. Perhaps through this, qualitative research in pilgrimage routes may increase and new data can be discovered.

Finally, regarding the languages in which the interviews were conducted, giving the opportunity to the participants to utilize their own native language and express themselves freely provided not only confidence to the interviewees but also richer data to the researcher. When conducting future research on national segmentation in sacred sites of the Asia-Pacific region, future researchers should consider these reflections. In particular, the large number of languages spoken in the Asia-Pacific region may pose some barriers in this regard and require the language expertise of multiple authors to tackle successfully.

8. 5. Implications for policy-makers related to tourism in pilgrimage routes

As mentioned before, this research not only aimed to make an academic contribution to its related fields, but also to provide data that may be of value to tourism managers and policy-makers, as other Japanese pilgrimage routes, such as the Shikoku Henro, are also aiming to attract international visitors. Therefore, below important points are mentioned, mostly related to the implications of visitor diversification and local community perception for management. These are considered relevant for public and non-public tourism bodies aiming to develop regional tourism utilizing resources related to pilgrimage, or to cultural heritage in general.

Firstly, the different views on the local community would be of importance for the policy-makers. Japanese visitors reported a low interest in the local community and placed more emphasis on Kumano Kodo as a historical site. On the contrary, the Australian visitors showed appreciation towards the locals, in particular due to their friendliness. These differences are, as explained in the previous chapter, because of contextual reasons related to travel patterns: as the Australians have longer stays and travel slower by walking, they have increased chances of interacting with the locals. On the other hand, the Japanese have shorter stays and usually travel by car, thus limiting their interaction with the community. The Bureau's efforts on grassroots tourism development aimed at hosting international visitors could be another factor affecting the overall positive image of international visitors as they helped the host community to be prepared for their arrival and efficiently interact with them (Tanabe Kumano Tourism Bureau n.d.). In relation to this, in a previous study (Progano, 2018b) carried in the Chikatsuyu community of the Nakahechi trail, some locals mentioned misconducts and cold behavior from the domestic tourists. It would certainly be of interest for local policy-makers to analyze this point further, as the locals are perceiving nationalities differently, and in turn, the locals are being perceived by each nationality differently. As inbound tourism grows in pilgrimage-related destinations, which are often in regional areas that are not used to receive international guests, monitoring the perception of tourists by the local community is of particular importance to ensure the community supports further tourism development. It is also important to understand what type of benefits the locals expecting from tourism. Are the locals expecting from visitors not only an economic benefit but also social exchanges? In connection to this, Progano (2018b) found that socio-cultural impacts such as interaction with tourists, events and promotion of local culture were perceived as being positive. While the locals thought that economic benefits were restricted, they seemed to be satisfied with its scale, growth speed and overall quality of life. The Bureau has taken a similar stance in their tourism planning, prioritizing sustainable

tourism development based on small groups and individual visitors (Progano, 2018a; Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau n.d.). These approaches seem reasonable as popular destinations in Japan, such as Kyoto, are already experiencing over-tourism and a resulting hostility towards tourism (Hagi 2017), following similar cases elsewhere (Seraphin, Sheeran and Pilato 2018). As the residents seem to prefer an overall small development that favors close interactions with visitors, a balance in development may be of utmost importance for sustainable tourism policies. For such policies to be carried out successfully, monitoring both how the visitors and the locals perceive each other is a valuable aspect that should be of importance for policy-makers.

Secondly, the different emphasis put on walking and hiking would also be of interest for tourism development both in Nakahechi route and other pilgrimage sites. These outdoor activities have a significance importance for Australian visitors, and are linked to the values of health, achievement and meaningful experiences Therefore, walking plays a major central part in the fulfillment of their tourism experience. However, the domestic tourists seldom mentioned outdoor activities as an important destination attribute and are more interested in more passive attributes including nature sightseeing that lead to the value of relaxation. As discussed before, the questionnaire carried out showed that the Japanese visitors' stays were shorter than the Australians, thus limiting their time to engage in slower forms of travel, such as walking. Their short stays are probably because of their use of automobiles and their relative proximity to the site. Another factor may be the general difficulty for the Japanese population to take paid leaves from work, which limits the promotion of longer holidays. Governmental reports already addressed this issue and proposed counter-initiatives to solve it (Prime Minister of Japan and Cabinet, 2012; 2016). However, data on the subject showed that it is far from being solved (Sankei News, 2017). Perhaps some of these subjects are beyond the control of regional tourism bodies, but nonetheless they require careful consideration when promoting local tourism destinations. For example, while the proximity of a big urban center such as Osaka may provide with a large number of potential visitors, the shorter holidays and easy access to the destination can potentially lead to a growth of one-day visitors, who have a smaller economic impact.

Thirdly, the attribute of countryside was also relevant for the Australian participants. As stated before they believed that only visiting large metropolis such as Tokyo or Osaka would give them a limited understanding of Japan, and therefore decided to visit destinations located in regional areas, such as Kumano Kodo, as part of their travel. In informal talks with the researcher, they sometimes also mentioned how Kumano Kodo was a part of a bigger travel program. This information would be of special relevance for both local and national government bodies that aim to revitalize regional economies through tourism development, as stated in official documents (Prime Minister of Japan and Cabinet, 2012). Indeed, showcasing the countryside areas of Japan as a complement to traditional urban destinations may help direct a portion of visitors to the regional areas. In this regard, the Japanese DMO registration system could become a valuable reference (Japan Tourism Agency, 2015). For example, large area cooperation DMOs, which cover different prefectures, may be able to device tourism campaigns in which the inbound tourist is presented with both traditional

urban destinations and rural areas in a comprehensive travel program, which showcases the different aspects of contemporary Japan linked to the value of "understanding-leaning". This way, urban and rural destinations would avoid having to compete between them for attracting visitors and instead work together. This approach, although it has a number of challenges, can be effective. For example, previous research (Progano, 2018a) has showed that regional DMOs have faced difficulties in carrying out comprehensive market research. The difficulty of traveling in regional areas for foreigners may also need to be taken into consideration, as they may have to face limitations in transport, Wi-fi connection, and infrastructure, among others. The language barrier and cultural differences may also pose a challenge that must be tackle in order to make tourism a positive force for the regional community and a pleasant experience for visitors. For this, the experience detailed here about Tanabe city's tourism development would truly of value for other regional communities aiming to attract inbound tourism.

Fourthly, local cuisine is another attribute that should be taken into account when promoting pilgrimage tourism in local communities, including local traditional dishes that can promoted for tourism consumption. Kim and Ellis (2015) have studied how simple Japanese cuisine found in rural areas, such as udon noodles from Kagawa prefecture, can be effectively marketed as a 'traditional' dish. While it is true that the Nakahechi trail is the main tourism attraction in Tanabe city, regional dishes that utilize local products, such as edible mountain plants from the Kumano region, were particularly well received by inbound visitors, showing the potential for further development. However, it is important to note that the acceptance of such dishes was facilitated by the establishment of food requests. Therefore, local governments who wish to promote their local cuisine to inbound visitors may either establish similar request systems, or be able to provide a variety of food options that cater to different types of visitors. Opening local cuisine to inbound tourism markets may also help to revitalize it (Mak, Lumbers & Eves, 2012).

Finally, the sector of wellness and health tourism in pilgrimage sites holds, in the researcher's opinion, a great potential that is yet to be tapped fully. Pilgrimage has been connected historically with health (Connell, 2011), as pilgrims used to travel to sacred sites in hopes of finding supernatural cures. Nowadays, while the search for miracles that cure illnesses still exists, wellness tourism is being intermingled with pilgrimage and religious practices, as it has been previously discussed (Stausberg, 2011; Lopez et al, 2017). Progano and Kato (2018) showed how *iyashi, a* contemporary spirituality phenomenon, influenced tourism promotion and activities in pilgrimage sites in Japan. The presence of wellness-related spiritual tourism elements is strong in Kumano Kodo, and can be principally seen in the concept of *iyashi* and the contemporary definition of *yomigaeri*. The Tanabe Tourism Bureau is aware of this and developed wellness programs for Japanese tourists. However, the study's results showed that, while Japanese are certainly attracted to pilgrimage sites for wellness purposes, foreigners might become a prospective market to be explored in the future.

8. 6. Final remarks

Sacred sites have played numerous roles across history. As seen in the present study, the Kumano area was originally a place for ascetic practices in the mountains, far from the Japanese urban settlements. Later, it started to be walked by lay pilgrims, from retired emperors to the common peasants. As its heyday passed, centuries later it was brought back into contemporary Japan as a prospect for regional communities struggling for their future. When the researcher came for the first time to the Wakayama prefecture, he was largely unaware of the rich history and culture of the place he arrived. Previous knowledge from Asian Studies helped to give context, as well as understand its history and traditions. Through studying and traveling, he also began to understand that the area holds a great potential for tourism research. This study, carried out for three years, was certainly a learning process for the researcher not only in his academic field but also on the very place where he lived for almost 6 years, getting to know the local culture and the different community members. It was an enriching experience that finally has shown its fruits. Proficiency on English, Spanish and Japanese also allowed for a broader engagement with the related academic discussions and with the different local stakeholders during the fieldwork.

As a final word, it is a tempting simplification to reduce pilgrimage tourism to a continuum where travelers have moved from traditional religion to individualized expressions of spirituality. However, the research showed that, although contemporary spirituality does play a role, it is but one of many aspects in pilgrimage tourism. Food, people, learning, intercultural exchanges, challenges, relaxation and nature all played significant roles, which are interrelated as the HVMs showed. Nature can be an opportunity for learning, as the Australian participants pointed out, but also a source of mental healing, as the Japanese often emphasized. Being in a natural area can also provide people with spirituality-related elements, such as meaningful experiences amid the forests and rivers of the Kumano area. The history and culture of Kumano, which is deeply related to pilgrimage, gave international visitors (here specifically Australians) a window to gaze upon Japanese culture, and thus have experiences outside their everyday cultural spheres. For the Japanese, their own culture and history provided both learning and relaxation. Still, the meanings and importance of pilgrimage sites in contemporary society cannot be reduced to the present study, which has only covered two nationalities in a single site. Further studies on the different nationalities traveling the pilgrimage sites of the world will surely find new narratives, behaviors and stories. In particular, the Asia-Pacific region, with its richness in pilgrimage and its remarkable international tourism development, where different nationalities encounter and interact with each other, provides a highly interesting and largely unexplored field of study. It is the hope of the researcher that this study can become a contribution to it and perhaps spark the curiosity of fellow academics who wish to continue this path.

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Illustrations

1. Map of Kumano Kodo routes, highlighting Nakahechi route. Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau (reproduced with permission). Source: http://www.tb-kumano.jp/es/kumano-kodo/nakahechi/ (2016/06/21).
2. Mountain view from the Takahara community (photograph taken by the researcher).
3. Entrance to the Kumano Hongu Taisha (photograph taken by the researcher).
4. The Chikatsuyu community during winter (photograph taken by the researcher).

Figures

1. Hierarchal Value Map for Australian participants.
2. Hierarchial Value Map for Japanese participants.

Tables

1. Occupation of Australian participants.
2. Occupation of Japanese participants.

Personal interviews to local key stakeholders

Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau, December 15th, 2016.

Wakayama Prefecture Tourism Agency, December 26th, 2016.

Kumano Hongu Taisha, January 16th, 2017.

Hongu Tourism Association, January 16th, 2017.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Consent form for participation in interview research (Japanese).

Appendix 2: Consent form for participation in interview research (English).

Appendix 3: Questionnaire (Japanese).

Appendix 4: Questionnaire (English).

Appendix 5: Aggregate matrices of Australian (left) and Japanese (right) participants.

調査の参加に対する同意書

研究タイトル: 巡礼道における多国観光客の動機比較　―熊野古道の中辺路から－

研究者: プロガノ・ニコラス (博士後期課程)

大学：和歌山大学

研究に御協力を頂いて誠にありがとうございます。研究の倫理的手続きは、参加者が面接に同意し、面接に含まれる情報がどのように使用されるのかを要求します。この同意書は、あなたの関与の目的を理解し、参加条件に同意するために必要です。

従って、この同意書を読んで署名して、承認したことを証明してください：

1. 面接の内容は観光の動機・個人的価値です。
2. 参加は任意です。面接が終了された後でも、いつでも参加を撤回し、参加を中止することができます。
3. 恩恵または支払いはありません。
4. 面接は約 10 分です。その間にメモが取られます。面接は記録されて、転写されます。
5. 面接データをさらに文脈化するために、簡単なアンケートを実施します。
6. 面接とアンケートは匿名です. 参加者のデータプライバシーを確保するためにデータが保存されます。
7. 参加者の言葉は、発表・論文で匿名を使って引用することが可能です。自身を特定できる情報が明らかにされないように注意します。
8. 研究者、譲受人、ライセンシーおよび後継者は、名誉毀損、プライバシーの侵害、または著作者人格権、宣伝権または著作権の侵害を含む面接の使用に関して生じる可能性のあるすべての主張から解放されます。参加者は研究の所有権がありません。

私は説明を読んで理解してくれまして、すべての質問を答えてくれました。自発的にこの研究に参加することに同意します：

お名前: _____　　日付: _____

サイン: _____　　(年/月/日)

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

Research title: Cross-national visitor profiling in pilgrimage sites - Kumano Kodo's Nakahechi route as a case study -
Researcher name: Progano, Ricardo Nicolas (Ph.D. Candidate)
Institution: Wakayama University

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my research project. Ethical procedures for academic research require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary to ensure that the purpose and nature of your involvement is clear and the conditions of your participation are agreeable to you.

Therefore, please read and then sign this consent form to certify that you approve:

1. Interview will be about tourist motivation and their relationship to personal values.
2. Participation is voluntary. Participants may withdraw or discontinue participation at any time, even after the interview has finished.
3. Participants will not receive any benefit or payment.
4. The interview lasts around 10 minutes. Notes will be taken. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed for further research analysis.
5. A brief demographic questionnaire will be administered to further contextualize interview data.
6. Both the interview and the questionnaire are anonymous. Data will be stored to ensure the privacy of all the participants.
7. Interviewees' words may be quoted directly utilizing pseudonyms in oral presentation or written articles. Care will be taken to ensure that identity and other personal information will not be revealed.
8. The interviewer and interviewer's assigns, licensees and successors are released from any claims that may arise regarding the use of the interview including any claims of defamation, invasion of privacy, or infringement of moral rights, rights of publicity or copyright. The interviewee has no ownership rights in the research.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name: _____ Date: _____
Signature: _____ (yyyy/mm/dd)

番号：_____	日付：_____年_____月_____日

A) 年齢

18-24 歳	25-34 歳	35-44 歳	45-54 歳	55-64 歳	65 歳又は以上

B) 性別:　1. 男　2. 女

C) 結婚歴:　1. 独身　2. 既婚　3. その他

D) 居住国:　1. 日本　2. その他

E) 教育

1. 初等教育	2. 前期中等教育	3. 後期中等教育	4. 中等以降高等以前教育
5. 短期高等教育	6. 学士	7. 大学院	

F) 職業

1. 教授	2. 公務員	3. プロフェッショナル
4. 学生	5. 会社員	6. 自営業者
7. 軍隊	8. フリーランス	9. アルバイト
10. 退職	11. 無職	12. その他

G) 自分を含める旅行グループの人数: (_____) 人

↳ 二人以上なら, 旅行グループとの関係は何ですか? 複数回答が可能です。

.

1. カップル	2. 家族	3. 友人	4. ツアー
4. 同僚者	5. ボランティア	6. その他	

H) この前に熊野古道に旅行したことがありますか？

1. いいえ　2. はい

↳ 「はい」なら, 何回来ましたか？　1. 一回　2. 二回　3. 三回又は以上

I) 熊野古道における旅行の全期間: (_____) 日 (_____) 泊

ご協力をありがとうございます

Number : _____	Date : _____yy _____mm _____dd

A) Age range

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 or above

B) Gender: 1. Male 2. Female

C) Marital status: 1. Single 2. Married 3. Other

D) Country of residence: 1. Australia 2. Other

E) Education

1.Primary or lower	2.Lower Secondary	3.Upper Secondary	4.Post-secondary non-tertiary education
5.Short-cycle tertiary education	6.Bachelor or equivalent	7. Post-graduate	

F) Occupation

1. Teacher	2. Public employee	3. Professional
4. Student	5. Company employee	6. Self-employed
7. Military	8. Freelance	9. Part-time
10. Retired	11. Unemployed	12. Other

G) Number of people in your travel party, <u>including yourself</u>: (_____) person(s)

If you wrote 2 or more, what is your relationship with your travel companion(s)? Multiple answers are possible.

1. Couple	2. Family	3. Friends	4. Tour companions
4. Working colleagues	5. Volunteers	6. Other	

.

H) Have you ever travelled to Kumano Kodo before?
1. No 2. Yes → If "Yes", how many times? 1. One 2. Two 3. Three or more

I) Length of your current travel in Kumano Kodo: (_____) Day(s) and (_____) Night(s)

Thank you for your cooperation

Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	**Attributes**
1) Accomodation		2.0																			1.0					.01																			.01						.01		.01	1) Accomodation
2) Comfortable																										1.0																			.01						1.0			2) Comfortable
3) Companionship																											1.0													.01												3) Companionship
4) Countryside															1.0						1.0	5.0			.01																									.01			.06	4) Countryside
5) Food																			2.1				2.0	4.0	1.0			1.0																.02		0.3						.01	5) Food
6) History and culture																													6.0				1.0							.01						.01			.01	.04	6) History and culture
7) Locals																									4.0				1.0	1.0	1.0							.01		1.4								.01	.01	.02	7) Locals
8) Nature															4.0						5.0															1.0				.01	.02		0.2	0.2		2.1		.01	.02	8) Nature
9) Onsen																													1.0														0.01										9) Onsen
10) Pilgrimage																											1.0													.01			1.									10) Pilgrimage
11) Spirituality																		1.0											1.0										2.0				1.		0.3		.01		1.0		11) Spirituality
12) Walking – hiking														1.0	2.0	5.0	5.0				1.0													1.0	.01		.04						1.1		0.5	1.		.03			.02	12) Walking – hiking
Consequences																																																				**Consequences**
13) A place for escaping																																															1.0				13) A place for escaping
14) Be active																																1.0																		.01	14) Be active
15) Experience nature																																												1.0	2.0		4.0				15) Experience nature
16) Being fit																																												5.0								16) Being fit
17) Challenge oneself																																					4.0					1.0										17) Challenge oneself
18) Connect to something greater																																													1.0							18) Connect to something greater
19) Different food																																																		1.0	19) Different food
20) Energy																				1.																									1.						20) Energy
21) Experience something different from everyday life																			1.0																1.0							3.0						1.0	4.1	21) Experience something different from everyday life
22) Experience the rural side of Japan																									1.0																										4.1	22) Experience the rural side of Japan
23) Food taste																																										2.0										23) Food taste
24) Fresh food																							1.0																					3.0								24) Fresh food
25) Friendliness																																								3.01										2.0	25) Friendliness
26) Have a good rest																																										1.0										26) Have a good rest
27) Have shared experiences																																								2.0												27) Have shared experiences
28) Healthy food																																												1.0								28) Healthy food
29) Learn about a different culture																																								.01		1.0					1.0		1.1	5.0	29) Learn about a different culture
30) Honesty																																																1.0			30) Honesty
31) Locals' sohpistication																																						1.0														31) Locals' sohpistication
32) See more places																																																		1.0	32) See more places
33) Simplicity																																														1.0					33) Simplicity
34) Slow down																																															1.0				34) Slow down
35) Variety																																																		1.0	35) Variety
36) Wildlife																																									1.0										36) Wildlife
Values																																																				**Values**
37) Achievement																																																				37) Achievement
38) Aesthetic value																																																				38) Aesthetic value
39) Be in the present moment																																													1.0							39) Be in the present moment
40) Bonding																																																				40) Bonding
41) Empathy																																																				41) Empathy
42) Enjoyment																																																				42) Enjoyment
43) Gratitude																																																				43) Gratitude
44) Health																																																				44) Health
45) Meaningful experience																																																				45) Meaningful experience
46) Quality																																																				46) Quality
47) Relaxation – refreshness																																												1.0								47) Relaxation – refreshness
48) Safety																																																				48) Safety
49) Self-development																																																				49) Self-development
50) Understanding – learning																																								2.0									1.0		50) Understanding – learning

Attributes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	**Attributes**
1) Accommodation																						1.0																		.01		1) Accommodation
2) Food																			1.0				3.0	1.0							.02		.01					.01			2) Food
3) Hiking – walking												1.0									1.0														.01			.01		3) Hiking – walking
4) History and culture												1.0								12.0		.01				2.01					.01			.02	.03		.02			.03	.01	4) History and culture
5) Locals																1.0									1.0																.01	5) Locals
6) Nature																					5.0	10.02						2.0					1.0				.02	.02		.011		6) Nature
7) Photography													1.0																		.01												7) Photography
8) Relationship with the area															1.0																		.01											8) Relationship with the area
9) Spirituality																				1.0									1.0	4.01							1.0				.01	9) Spirituality
10) Travel														1.0								2.0														.01				.01	.01	10) Travel
11) World Heritage registration																	1.0	4.0		1.0							1.01				.01				.03				.02	.01		11) World Heritage registration
Consequences																																										**Consequences**
12) Energy																																					1.0				1.0	12) Energy
13) Capture the moment																															1.0												13) Capture the moment
14) Challenge oneself																																									1.0	14) Challenge oneself
15) Connect with one's roots																																1.0											15) Connect with one's roots
16) Connect with others																																									1.0	16) Connect with others
17) Conserve culture																											1.0								.01								17) Conserve culture
18) Curiosity																															1.0				1.0				2.0			18) Curiosity
19) Different food																															1.0												19) Different food
20) Experience a historical site																						1.0				1.0					1.0			1.0	3.0		1.01			2.1		20) Experience a historical site
21) Experience nature																						2.0											.01				1.0			1.01		21) Experience nature
22) Experience something different from everyday life																																	1.0			1.0	1.0			15.0		22) Experience something different from everyday life
23) Food taste																															1.0							1.0				23) Food taste
24) Fresh food																																	1.0										24) Fresh food
25) Friendliness																1.0																									.01	25) Friendliness
26) Japanese-ness																																		1.0			1.0			1.0		26) Japanese-ness
27) Pass culture to future generations																																			2.0								27) Pass culture to future generations
28) Similar to hometown																																						2.0		.01		28) Similar to hometown
29) Talk about religion with others																														1.0													29) Talk about religion with others
Values																																										**Values**
30) Connection with the Divine																																									1.0	30) Connection with the Divine
31) Enjoyment																																										31) Enjoyment
32) Family																																										32) Family
33) Health																																										33) Health
34) Identity																																										34) Identity
35) Understanding – learning																																										35) Understanding – learning
36) Life balance																																										36) Life balance
37) Meaningful experience																																										37) Meaningful experience
38) Nostalgia																																								1.0		38) Nostalgia
39) Pride																																										39) Pride
40) Relaxation – refreshness																																										40) Relaxation – refreshness
41) Self-development																																										41) Self-development