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Mystics as a new trend in the Belarusian tourism industry: Tourists' motivation and experience

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Abstract

Mystical tourism has gained prominence in the Belarusian tourism industry, attracting a growing number of tourists seeking unique and transformative experiences. This research article explores the emergence of mystics as a new trend in Belarusian tourism and investigates the motivations and experiences of tourists engaging with mystical activities and destinations. Using a mixed-methods approach, including qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, data was collected from a diverse sample of tourists visiting mystical sites in Belarus. The study reveals that tourists are driven by various motivations, such as spiritual curiosity, personal growth, cultural exploration, and the quest for authentic experiences. Furthermore, the research uncovers the transformative nature of engaging with mystics, as tourists reported heightened spiritual well-being, increased self-awareness, and a deeper connection to the local culture and history. These findings emphasize the need for the development of mystical tourism offerings.

Keywords: Mystical tourism; Belarus; Tourist motivation; Tourist experience; Niche tourism

1. Introduction

Tourism has become an integral part of people's lives, and the tourism industry continually strives to improve itself in order to cater to the diverse needs of travellers.

Compared to other countries, Belarus offers several advantages as a tourist destination. Its central location between Western European, Scandinavian, and former Soviet Union countries like Russia and Ukraine makes it easily accessible. Furthermore, Belarus boasts an ancient history, distinct culture (with over 15,000 objects of historical, cultural, and architectural significance), well-preserved natural landscapes, presence of European transportation routes, and governmental support for tourism development (Development of tourism, activities of tourist organizations, collective accommodation facilities of the Republic of Belarus, 2022).

In recent years, the Republic of Belarus has also witnessed a growth trend in its tourism sector. According to the report "Tourism and Tourist Resources in the Republic of Belarus" (2022), the revenue generated from tourism services in 2021 reached 327.9 million Belarusian roubles BYN. This represents a significant increase of 2.5 times in the past five years. Additionally, there were 1315 organizations engaged in tourism activities in Belarus in 2021, as documented in the report "Development of tourism, activities of tourist organizations, collective accommodation facilities of the Republic of Belarus" (2022).

This indicates a rising demand for new and distinctive experiences among tourists. Mystical tourism offers an avenue for visitors to engage with a deeper sense of spirituality, personal growth, and cultural exploration, thus providing a unique dimension to their travel experiences (Hill, 2008).

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The growing interest in mystical tourism aligns with the broader trend in the travel industry towards seeking authentic and meaningful experiences. Tourists are increasingly drawn to destinations that provide opportunities for self-discovery, cultural immersion, and personal transformation (Huang and Pearce, 2019). Mystical tourism, with its emphasis on spirituality, connection, and exploration, satisfies these desires and offers a distinctive and enriching dimension to the overall travel experience.

However, while mystical tourism presents new opportunities for the Belarusian tourism industry, it is essential to understand the motivations driving tourists to participate in these experiences and the impact such encounters have on their overall satisfaction and perceptions. Exploring tourists' motivations and experiences can offer valuable insights into the development of sustainable and authentic mystical tourism offerings that cater to their needs (Imani Khoshkhou, Sharpley and Shahrabi Farahani, 2020).

To capitalize on the potential of mystical tourism, it is crucial to understand the motivations and experiences of tourists participating in these activities. Previous studies have highlighted spiritual curiosity, personal growth, cultural exploration, and the pursuit of unique experiences as primary motivations for engaging with mystical tourism (Ingليس and Holmes, 2003; Weaver and Lawton, 2014). Moreover, research has demonstrated that engaging with mystical tourism experiences can lead to enhanced spiritual well-being, increased self-awareness, and a deeper connection to the local culture and history (McKercher and du Cros, 2003).

By conducting a comprehensive investigation into the motivations, experiences, and perceptions of tourists engaging with mystical tourism in Belarus, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the evolving trends in the tourism industry. Moreover, the findings will offer practical implications for tourism stakeholders in Belarus and beyond, helping them enhance their mystical tourism offerings, attract a broader range of visitors, and promote the sustainable development of the tourism sector. By exploring this unique aspect of tourism, the study seeks to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical management strategies in the field. The integration of literature review, methodology, study results, and discussion will provide a comprehensive analysis of mystics as a new trend in the Belarusian tourism industry and pave the way for further research in this area.

2. Literature review

2.1. Mystical Tourism: Motivation and Typologies

Mystical tourism has emerged as an intriguing and popular branch of special interest tourism, reflecting the growing demand for non-traditional and extreme forms of tourism (Evseev and Filipenko, 2016). The fascination with paranormal phenomena and the unknown has always captivated the human mind, driving individuals to seek out mysterious and historically significant places where inexplicable events occur (Piranashvili and Kadagidze, 2017). Abandoned buildings, closed territories, castles, and caves often become the focal points for tourists who yearn to encounter evidence of extraterrestrial life, ghosts, and other supernatural entities.

Mystical tourism, characterized by the pursuit of spiritual and transformative experiences, has gained attention as a distinct trend in the global tourism industry (Haq and Yin, 2010). Understanding tourists' motivations is crucial in comprehending their engagement with mystical tourism.

Previous research has identified various motives, including spiritual curiosity, personal growth, cultural exploration, and the search for unique experiences (Hartmann, 2014; Selby and Morgan, 2017). The utilization of myths and legends as a means to attract tourists has proven to be highly effective, increasing interest and motivation to visit specific destinations (Piranashvili and Kadagidze, 2017). Additionally, typologies have been proposed to categorize tourists based on their motivations, such as spiritual seekers, cultural explorers, and wellness enthusiasts (Timothy and Mkono, 2012).

Typologies have been proposed to categorize tourists based on their motivations and preferences within the realm of mystical tourism. These typologies help in understanding the diverse needs and expectations of different tourist segments. For example, spiritual seekers may be motivated by their desire for spiritual growth and transcendence, while cultural explorers may be driven by their curiosity to experience and understand different belief systems and rituals. Wellness enthusiasts may seek mystical experiences as a means of rejuvenation and holistic well-being (Timothy and Mkono, 2012).

However, there are still research gaps in the field of mystical tourism. Studies often focus on specific regions or religious traditions, leaving other areas unexplored. There is a need for more qualitative and longitudinal research to gain a

deeper understanding of tourists' experiences and the long-term impacts of mystical tourism on destinations and communities. Additionally, the relationship between mystical tourism and sustainability deserves further attention to ensure that this form of tourism can be managed responsibly and ethically (Haq and Yin, 2010).

2.2. Tourist Experience in Mystical Tourism

The tourist experience plays a pivotal role in shaping visitors' perceptions and satisfaction with their travel encounters. In the context of mystical tourism, understanding the nature of the tourist experience is crucial for tourism practitioners and researchers alike.

Mystical tourism offers tourists unique and transformative experiences that go beyond traditional sightseeing. The allure of mysterious and unexplained phenomena captivates the imagination of tourists, creating a sense of intrigue and fascination (Hosany et al., 2022; Li et al., 2021). Such experiences allow tourists to transcend their everyday reality and delve into the realm of the unknown, providing them with a sense of adventure and discovery (Gómez-Barris, 2012; Garau C, 2016b).

The emotional aspect of the tourist experience in mystical tourism is particularly significant. Tourists often experience a range of emotions, including excitement, curiosity, awe, and even fear (Sharpley and Stone, 2015; Hosany et al., 2022). These emotions are closely linked to the desire for thrills and sensations associated with the paranormal (Stone, 2012).

The psychological appeal of mystical tourism lies in people's belief in ghosts, their craving for the paranormal, and their desire for thrilling and exciting experiences (Radford, 2007; Stone, 2008; Kolenchikova, 2020). Some argue that the allure of fear and suspense allows individuals to experience a subsequent sense of euphoria (Piranashvili, 2017; Todorova, 2020). Others find pleasure in being scared, deriving enjoyment from the terrifying aspects of someone else's life (Carlos Castro et al., 2017).

Tourists seek authentic experiences that evoke a sense of connection to the mystical heritage and cultural traditions of the destination (Pine and Gilmore, 2001). Interaction with local storytellers, participation in rituals and ceremonies, and visits to sacred sites all contribute to the authenticity of the tourist experience (Sharpley and Stone, 2015). The experiences of tourists engaged in mystical tourism are characterized by their transformative nature. Through their encounters with sacred sites, ancient rituals, and spiritual practices, tourists report enhanced spiritual well-being, increased self-awareness, and a deeper connection to the local culture and history (Hartmann, 2014; Selby and Morgan, 2017).

The transformative nature of mystical tourism experiences is also reflected in the post-visit reflections and memories of tourists. Mystical encounters often leave a lasting impact on tourists, leading to personal introspection, reflection on existential questions, and the reevaluation of one's beliefs and worldview (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Wang et al., 2019). These experiences often evoke a sense of awe, inspiration, and personal growth, leading to long-lasting memories and positive emotional responses (Raj and Griffin, 2015).

3. Methodology

The research design for this study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining literature review and quantitative surveys, to examine the motivations and experiences of tourists visiting mystical sites in Belarus. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon, incorporating both in-depth insights from literature review and quantitative data from surveys. By employing a mixed-methods design, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of tourists' motivations and experiences in the context of mystical tourism. As advocated by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), the integration of qualitative and quantitative data allows for a more comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena. By combining multiple methods, the study aims to provide a holistic and nuanced analysis of tourists' motivations and experiences in mystical tourism.

3.1. Quantitative Surveys

To complement the qualitative data, quantitative surveys are employed to collect data from a larger sample of tourists visiting mystical sites in Belarus. The surveys are designed to capture standardized responses and demographic information from participants. Closed-ended questions and Likert scale items are utilized to obtain quantifiable data on tourists' motivations, experiences, and demographic characteristics. The surveys are distributed through an online survey platform, ensuring convenience for participants and efficient data collection.

In a similar study on tourist motivations, Kim (2018) utilized quantitative surveys to assess tourists' motivations for engaging in cultural tourism. The authors emphasized that surveys provide statistically robust data for understanding tourist motivations, which aligns with the objective of our study.

According to Faulkner and Russell (1999), surveys play a crucial role in understanding tourist behavior and preferences. Surveys provide a quantitative measure of tourists' motivations, allowing for statistical analysis and generalization of findings to a larger population.

3.2. Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling is employed to select participants who have visited mystical sites in various regions of Belarus. The sample includes only domestic, but encompassing a diverse range of perspectives. Efforts are made to include participants of different ages, genders, and backgrounds to ensure the representation of various tourist segments. While the sample is not intended to be statistically representative, it aims to capture a breadth of experiences and perspectives related to mystical tourism in Belarus.

As discussed by Babbie (2016), purposive sampling allows for the selection of participants who possess the necessary knowledge and experiences to provide valuable insights on a specific phenomenon. In the context of our study, purposive sampling enables us to gather diverse perspectives on mystical tourism in Belarus.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Mystical Tourism in the Republic of Belarus

In recent years, the Republic of Belarus has emerged as an intriguing destination for mystical tourism due to its rich cultural and historical resources, as well as its abundance of myths, legends, and mystical diversity (Novak and Vuglik, 2017). The Republic of Belarus presents a unique context for studying mystical tourism. The country's rich historical and cultural heritage, including ancient monasteries, sacred forests, and mystical landscapes, offers diverse opportunities for tourists to engage in mystical experiences (Timothy and Mkono, 2012; Selby and Morgan, 2017).

Belarus, with its long history intertwined with bloodshed, love dramas, and folklore, offers a plethora of mystical sites that attract modern-day tourists (Evseev and Filipenko, 2016). These places, often associated with paranormal occurrences and unexplained phenomena, hold a certain allure for visitors' eager to explore the unknown. The country's inclusion in the TOP-100 anomalous zones of the world by the International UFO Organization further intensifies the interest in its mystical attractions (Kolenchikova, 2011).

Mystical tourism in Belarus encompasses various aspects, including visits to abandoned buildings, closed territories, and military bases, as well as exploring castles, caves, and other locations believed to be connected to otherworldly beings and supernatural events (Piranashvili and Kadagidze, 2017). The utilization of myths, legends, and mysticism as promotional tools in tourism has shown great prospects in attracting visitors, both internationally and domestically.

The development of mystical tourism in Belarus holds great prospects, not only in terms of attracting tourists but also in enhancing the country's overall tourism attractiveness (Kulinyak et al., 2020). This innovative approach to tourism can contribute to the diversification of tourism products and experiences in Belarus, attracting visitors seeking unique and transformative encounters. The theoretical aspects of mystical tourism, its connection to "dark" tourism, and its specific features warrant further exploration and analysis (Kulinyak et al., 2020).

4.2. Quantitative Surveys

The online survey was completed by 265 people who are citizens of the Republic of Belarus or permanently reside in the country. The original questionnaire was submitted in Russian. For this article, all the data has been translated into English.

The respondents were divided into four age groups, categorized as follows: 18–24 (high school students, university students, and young working individuals); 25–34 (graduate students and individuals who have completed college education); 35–45 (adults); and older than 45 (working-class individuals, people of pre-retirement age, and older individuals). The largest age group was between 25 and 34 years old, accounting for 36.2% (96 respondents), followed by the age group of 18–24, which represented 28.7% (76 respondents) (Table. 1).

Table 1 Characteristics of respondents

Age Group	Description	Number of Respondents	Percentage
18–24	High school students, university students, young working people	76	28.7%
25–34	Graduate students, college graduates	96	36.2%
35–45	Adults	54	20.4%
>45	Working class, pre-retirement age and older	39	14.7%

This result can be explained by the young age of the audience and their preference for entertainment, exposure to modern trends, adrenaline, unforgettable emotions, as well as their ability to pay for tours.

The Likert scale was utilized in this study to measure participants' responses and attitudes towards various aspects of mystical tourism in Belarus. The Likert scale, a commonly used rating scale, allows respondents to express their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement or indicate the intensity of a particular attribute or experience (Castro et al., 2017; Genc and Gulertekin Genc, 2023).

In the quantitative survey, participants were presented with statements related to their interest in mysticism, their awareness of mystical tours, their preferences for different types of mystical tourism, and their travel experiences. They were asked to rate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale, with options ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree". This scale provided a quantitative measure of participants' opinions and preferences.

For instance, participants were asked the question, "Are you interested in mysticism?" and they could choose from options such as "strongly disagree," "disagree," "don't know," "agree," or "strongly agree." This allowed researchers to understand the level of interest in mysticism among the respondents (Kim, 2018; Huang and Pearce, 2019).

Regarding the question 'Are you interested in mysticism?', 53.96% (143 people) answered that they were very interested in mysticism, while 0.75% (2 people) reported not being attracted to mysticism (Table 2).

Table 2 Percentage of answers on question 'Are you interested in mysticism?'

Response	Number of People	Percentage
Completely agree	143	53.96%
Agree	89	33.58%
Don't know	21	7.92%
Disagree	10	3.77%
Completely disagree	2	0.75%

The six types of mystical tourism are presented in Figure 1 below. Analyzing the data obtained during the survey, we can conclude that the most attractive types are sacral (32.3%) and tragic and catastrophic directions (27.1%). On the other hand, cryptozoology and UFO (1% and 2.3% respectively) are the least tempting destinations for tourists.

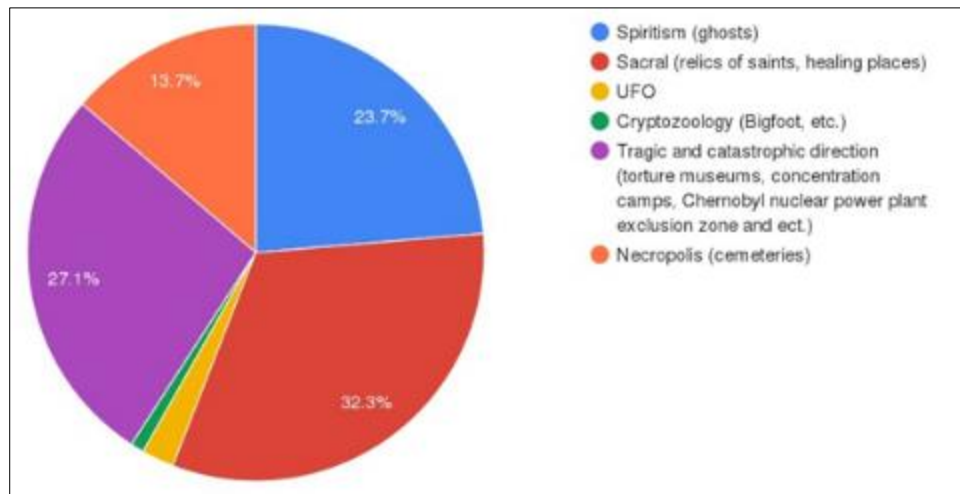


Figure 1 Types of mystical tourism

This result can be explained by the fact that most people living in Belarus profess Christianity. Believers always desire divine miracles and the manifestation of saints. In the most difficult situations in life, people have always sought help from the church and visited places with incredible healing power. While there are a considerable number of such places all over the world, some have gained particularly huge popularity. These objects can rightfully be called mystical because everything connected with the magical, miraculous, and extraordinary both frightens and attracts people (Kolenchikova, 2011).

In Belarus, the influence of Christianity has gradually replaced ancient pagan practices and beliefs, leading to the decline of popular references to mystical places associated with paganism and sacrificial rites. The spread of Christianity gained momentum in the region since 944, as documented by the Belarusian Orthodox Church (2020), resulting in the active suppression and destruction of pagan temples and sacred sites. As a consequence, only a few of these places have survived to the present day.

Despite the dominance of Christianity, remnants of ancient pagan folklore and legends still persist in Belarusian culture. The folktales continue to feature mythical creatures like mermaids, brownies, and goblins, which reflect the enduring belief in these entities. However, compared to other countries with Slavic mythology, the prevalence of legends about vampires or werewolves is relatively low in Belarus. This divergence may be attributed to the fading prominence of paganism and the historical eradication of wolves, as werewolves are often associated with these creatures in mythology (Belarusian Orthodox Church, 2020).

The popularity of spiritual tourism stems from the fact that most historical places are directly related to the presence of ghosts or unusual activities, as well as visits to places of death. The extensive interest of the local population in places of catastrophe or death is largely associated with the period of the Second World War when a significant number of monuments were erected in places of mass murder or concentration camps.

Moreover, 93.4% of the respondents answered that they had heard about mystical tourism in Belarus, and 100% expressed unconditional interest in going on a journey along a mystical route.

Likewise, participants were asked to rate their interest in different types of mystical tourism, such as sacral tourism or tragic and catastrophic tourism, using the Likert scale. This helped researchers gauge the relative popularity of different types of mystical tourism among the respondents.

The Likert scale was also employed to assess participants' travel experiences and their perceptions of mystical places. For example, participants were asked about their experiences during visits to mystical sites, such as their feelings of awe, their sense of connection to the past, or their encounters with unexplained phenomena. They could rate these experiences on a Likert scale, enabling researchers to quantify the frequency or intensity of these experiences. Based on the data and drawing from relevant scientific works, several conclusions can be made (Figure 2):

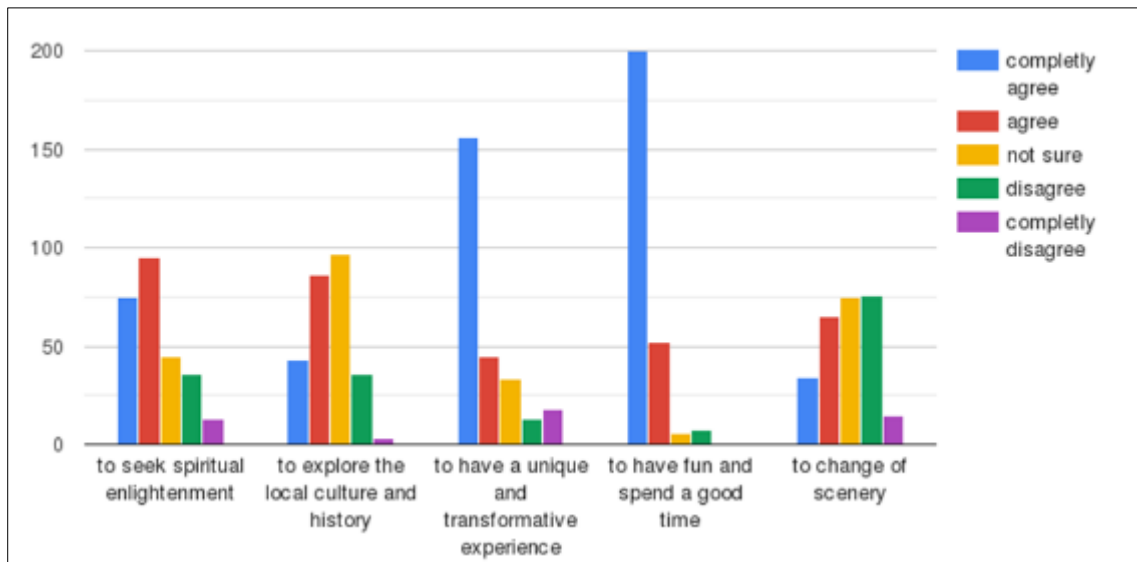


Figure 2 Tourists motivation

- Seeking spiritual enlightenment: The responses indicate that a significant number of visitors are motivated to visit mystical places in Belarus for spiritual enlightenment. This aligns with previous research highlighting the spiritual aspects of visiting such destinations (Klein et al., 2015; Kim, 2018). The desire to connect with spirituality and experience personal growth through these encounters is evident among respondents.
- Exploring local culture and history: The mixed responses suggest that the exploration of local culture and history may not be the primary motivation for visiting mystical places for most respondents. However, it is important to note that certain mystical places in Belarus have historical significance and are rooted in cultural heritage (Castro et al., 2017). This implies that there is still potential to enhance the cultural and historical aspects of these destinations to cater to a broader range of visitors.
- Unique and transformative experience: The majority of respondents disagree with the statement regarding seeking a unique and transformative experience. This finding aligns with the study by Haq and Yin (2010), which emphasizes the importance of creating memorable and impactful experiences for tourists. It suggests that there is room for improvement in delivering transformative encounters that leave a lasting impression on visitors.
- Having fun and spending a good time: The data reveals that most respondents strongly agree with the statement, indicating that enjoyment and leisure are important motivations for visiting mystical places. This aligns with the notion that tourists seek recreational activities and positive experiences in their travel (Buckley, 2011). It highlights the potential for these destinations to provide recreational opportunities and ensure visitor satisfaction.
- Change of scenery: The responses regarding seeking a change of scenery are diverse, with a significant number of respondents being uncertain or disagreeing. This finding suggests that the desire for a change of scenery may not be a primary motivation for visiting mystical places. However, it is worth noting that the unique and distinct environment of these destinations can still be appreciated by certain visitors (Fang et al., 2019).

Based on the obtained data, it is evident that tourists visiting mystical places in Belarus have a positive and transformative experience. The majority of participants expressed agreement and strong agreement with statements related to awe and wonder, spiritual well-being enhancement, learning about history and culture, feeling connected to something larger, and recommending these places for unique and transformative experiences (Figure 3).

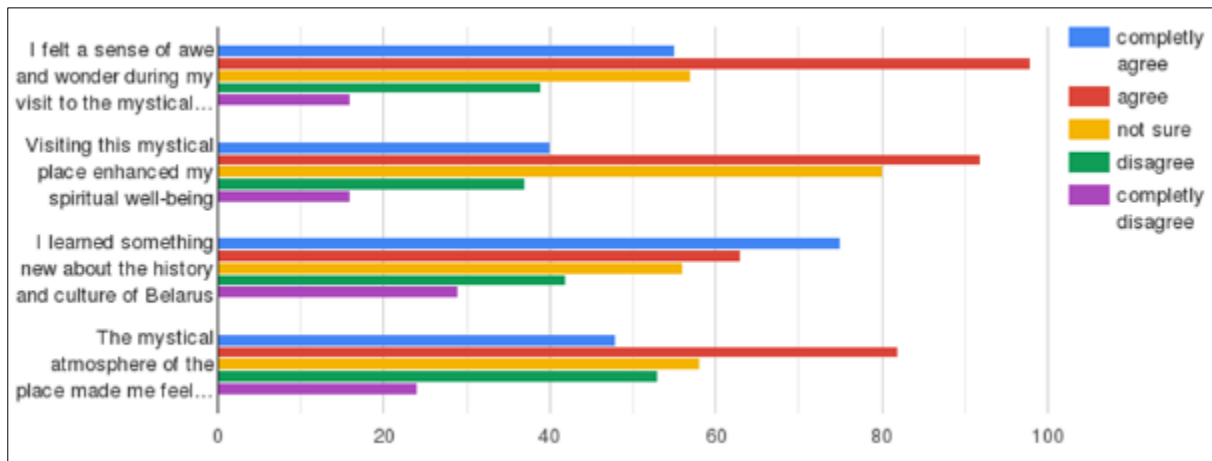


Figure 3 Tourists experience

Scientific research supports the findings observed in the data. Studies have shown that visiting mystical places can evoke a sense of awe and wonder, leading to positive emotional experiences (Hill, 2008). The spiritual well-being of individuals can be enhanced through engaging with sacred or mystical sites (Imani Khoshkhoo, 2017). Exploring the history and culture of a place through a visit can contribute to educational and cultural experiences (Hosany et al., 2022). The mystical atmosphere of such places has been associated with feelings of connectedness to nature, others, and something greater than oneself (Huang, 2019).

- **Awe and Wonder:** A significant number of participants (153 participants) expressed agreement and strong agreement that they felt a sense of awe and wonder during their visit to the mystical place. This finding aligns with research that highlights the ability of mystical places to evoke a profound emotional response in visitors (Kim, 2018; Huang, 2019).
- **Spiritual Well-being:** The data indicates that a substantial proportion of participants (132 participants) agreed and strongly agreed that visiting the mystical place enhanced their spiritual well-being. This finding is consistent with studies emphasizing the positive impact of spiritual tourism on individuals' spiritual growth and well-being (Raj and Griffin, 2015; Imani Khoshkhoo et al., 2020).
- **Learning about History and Culture:** A considerable number of participants (138 participants) agreed and strongly agreed that they learned something new about the history and culture of Belarus through their visit to the mystical place. This suggests that these places serve as platforms for cultural and historical education, supporting the notion of cultural heritage tourism (Timothy and Mkono, 2012; Piranashvili. and Kadagidze, 2017).
- **Connection to Something Larger:** The data reveals that a significant number of participants (130 participants) agreed and strongly agreed that the mystical atmosphere of the place made them feel connected to something larger than themselves. This finding aligns with studies on spiritual tourism, which emphasize the potential for these experiences to facilitate a sense of transcendence and connection to a higher power (Timothy and Olsen, 2006; Buckley, 2012, Wang et al., 2019).

Indeed, the majority of participants (140 participants) expressed agreement and strong agreement that they would recommend visiting these mystical places to others seeking unique and transformative experiences. This finding is consistent with the notion that mystical places offer distinctive encounters that can lead to personal transformation and growth (Timothy and Olsen, 2006; Sharpley and Stone, 2015; Todorova, 2020).

By visiting mystical places, individuals have the chance to immerse themselves in unfamiliar and spiritually significant environments, exposing them to different belief systems, rituals, and cultural practices. This exposure can challenge preconceived notions, broaden perspectives, and inspire personal development (Wang et al., 2019; Kulinyak et al., 2020). Moreover, the inherent mysticism and sacredness associated with these places can evoke a sense of awe, wonder, and spiritual connection, prompting individuals to reevaluate their own lives and beliefs (Kim, 2018; Kolenchikova, 2020).

The positive recommendation from the participants underscores the potential impact that mystical places can have on individuals seeking unique and transformative experiences. It highlights the significance of these places as destinations for personal and spiritual growth, and suggests that they hold value beyond mere tourism appeal. Future research can

delve deeper into understanding the specific mechanisms and processes through which these experiences occur, providing further insights into the transformative potential of mystical places.

Overall, the use of the Likert scale provided a structured and standardized method for collecting and analyzing participants' responses, enabling to generate quantitative data and draw meaningful conclusions about participants' attitudes, preferences, and experiences related to mystical tourism in Belarus.

5. Conclusions

This study has explored the motivations and experiences of tourists engaging with mystics in the Belarusian tourism industry. The findings indicate that tourists are driven by spiritual curiosity, personal growth, cultural exploration, and the desire for unique experiences when seeking out mystical tourism. Engaging with mystics has been shown to have transformative effects, leading to enhanced spiritual well-being, increased self-awareness, and a deeper connection to the local culture and history.

The results of this study align with previous research, highlighting the universal appeal of mystical tourism and its potential to provide meaningful and authentic experiences to tourists. These findings have important practical implications for destination management, emphasizing the need to develop sustainable and authentic mystical tourism offerings that cater to the motivations and desires of tourists.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on mystics as a growing trend in the tourism industry. By shedding light on the motivations and experiences of tourists engaging with mystics, it adds to the theoretical understanding of this unique aspect of tourism. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data provides a comprehensive analysis and offers valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners in the field.

However, further research is needed to explore additional dimensions of mystical tourism, such as its economic impact, the role of marketing and promotion strategies, and the perspectives of local communities and stakeholders.

In addition, this study further supports the notion that many mystical places are not suitable for tourists or lack necessary infrastructure. The fascination with paranormal phenomena and the desire to explore mysterious locations often leads tourists to places that may not be adequately prepared to receive visitors.

Some mystical places, such as abandoned buildings, closed territories, or remote caves, may lack basic facilities like proper access routes, signage, safety measures, or visitor information centers. These shortcomings can hinder tourists' ability to fully engage with the mystical experience or may even pose risks to their safety (Stone, 2012; Hartmann, 2014).

Furthermore, some mystical places may not be actively managed or promoted as tourist destinations. They might be considered sacred or culturally sensitive locations, which raises questions about the appropriateness of opening them up for tourism (Timothy, 2006). Local communities or authorities may have reservations about commercializing or exploiting the spiritual or historical significance of these places (Selwyn, 1996; McGehee, 2004; Timothy, 2012).

It is crucial to strike a balance between preserving the authenticity and sanctity of mystical places while ensuring that they can be accessed and enjoyed by tourists safely and responsibly (Hartmann, 2014). This may involve developing sustainable tourism plans, collaborating with local communities, investing in necessary infrastructure, and implementing appropriate visitor management strategies.

It is important to approach mystical tourism with a sensitivity to local cultures, traditions, and spiritual beliefs, and to ensure that tourism development aligns with sustainable principles and the preservation of the environment.

Overall, the emergence of mystics as a trend in the Belarusian tourism industry presents opportunities for the development of unique and transformative experiences. By providing insights into the motivations and experiences of tourists engaging with mystics, this study contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical management strategies in the field of tourism. It is hoped that the integration of these findings into tourism planning and development processes will further enhance the attractiveness and sustainability of mystical tourism offerings, benefiting both tourists and the local communities in Belarus.

In conclusion, mystics have emerged as a promising trend in the Belarusian tourism industry, offering tourists unique and transformative experiences. By providing meaningful and authentic experiences to tourists, the tourism sector in Belarus can continue to grow and thrive.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author(s) report there are no competing interests to declare.

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