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Were hospitallers some of the earliest tour operators?

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Abstract: Despite the increasing research interest in tourism, there are often misunderstandings and assumptions about tourism that are at odds with historical facts; one example being misleading impressions held about the role and function of Hospitallers of the Middle Ages. This study aims to clarify the situation in that specific case by comparing the recorded actions of the Hospitallers with the accepted functions of travel agents, using a systematic literature review. First, the functions of tour operators are identified and described using a functionalist approach. Then the tasks of Hospitallers are compared with these to ascertain if Hospitallers met those functions of tour operators. The result confirms that Hospitallers were indeed tour operators during their initial period of operation, leading to the conclusion that tour operation is not a product of the modern world but is very much older. It can be said that there is no need to oversimplify the tour operation activities in recent times due to mass tourism.

Keywords: Functionalism, Hospitallers, systematic literature review, tour operator, tourism history

1 Introduction

Although the discipline of history contributes to a better and deeper understanding of past and contemporary issues (Kostiainen, 2014), many tourism studies have a present-time-centred approach and need to be more consistent with historical facts (Walton, 2005). This can lead to a limited understanding of tourism (Towner, 1995), particularly regarding its origins and early periods. Studies on travel and touring throughout history should be evaluated in the context of each period's unique nature and characteristics (Gyr, 2010). An example of a modern-centred belief that is generally accepted is that Thomas Cook was the first person to offer tours, and his company was the first tour operator organisation (Cormack, 1982; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022b; Polat & Arslan, 2019) but it is clear that tourism has a far longer history than is commonly known and that Cook was far from being the first tour operator (Ahmed, 2015; Cicero, 1960; Friedländer, 1965; García Romero, 2013; Gyr, 2012; Hunt, 1982; Madden, 2007; Theilmann, 1987; Towner & Wall, 1991; Walton, 2021). Part of the reason for the misconception about Cook is that there is no in-depth study that analyses the functions of a tour operator, or that investigates the early existence of such an organisation that would contradict this incorrect belief.

Tourism's basic patterns and characteristics have mostly stayed the same for 2000 years despite many innovations and developments (Butler, 2015). For instance, pilgrimage is a type of tourism (Turner & Turner, 1978; Digance, 2003) that was often conducted in dangerous settings with limited individual support in the Medieval Ages (Sigal et al., 2005). It has been argued that medieval pilgrims were travellers who engaged in an early form of mass tourism (Digance, 2003) and had a range of specific needs, as do today's tourists. The Hospitallers' activities are related primarily to pilgrims and have been shown to involve activities such as providing protection, transport, and healing (Beveridge & O'Gorman, 2012). However, a detailed examination of whether Hospitallers functioned as a medieval tour operator organisation remains a gap in the literature.

Every organisation has specific functions (Spencer, 1898), and using the functionalist approach, the functions

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of any organisation can be revealed (Bredemeier, 1955). By comparing the functions of Hospitallers and tour operators, it is possible to ascertain if they represent the same organisation (as a social structure), despite their names perhaps suggesting otherwise. Just as every sociological phenomenon has a historical side, every historical phenomenon has a sociological side (Mills, 1959). Functionalism, as a sociological perspective (Mooney et al., 2022), is a suitable approach for understanding phenomena operating within a system (Bredemeier, 1955). The use of functionalism for analysing a structure can be summarised as explaining how A maintains B through C, which represents a function (Bredemeier, 1955; Lazarsfeld & Kendall, 1950, 1974). Tourism is also a system that has various norms (Leiper, 1979), and the role of tour operators in this system is distinct and significant (Gartner & Bachri, 1994; Holloway, 1992). Tour operators offer a range of services, including transportation, accommodation, food services, and other miscellaneous services, such as organising attendance at events and attractions (Bryant, 2022; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). The main contributions of tour operators in the current tourism system are maintaining and enabling the flow of tourists (Baldarelli, 2000; Gartner & Bachri, 1994).

Numerous historical facts and records concerning the operation of the Hospitallers do exist, but have been little studied in tourism (Riley-Smith, 2010). Using the lens of the functionalist approach to examine this literature on Hospitallers and selecting certain information as per the functionalist protocol represents a typical example of a systematic literature analysis (Peričić & Tanveer, 2019). Inclusion criteria were formed in line with the functional explanation of a structure (Bredemeier, 1955; Lazarsfeld & Kendall, 1950, 1974). This study's innovative contributions include not only filling a gap in the analysis of medieval tour operations but also highlighting the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to tourism history by offering a way to reveal tourism structures in the medieval period, thereby enhancing our understanding of the medieval tourism system.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Functionalism

Functionalism has been shaped particularly by the ideas of Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Robert Merton, and Talcott Parsons (Mooney et al., 2022). It is a doctrine that explains what one element means about the other elements in a system, rather than seeking the meaning of the element within its internal structure (Levin, 2021). In Social Science, it is an understanding that focuses on the functions of acts exhibited by a social structure like an organisation or institution (Gomez-Diego, 2020). It is based on the fact that social phenomena can be explained by processes similar to biological mechanisms (Giddens, 1984). Just as the functions performed by organs fulfil a physical body's needs, social needs are fulfilled by the functions of organisations (Spencer, 1898).

Functionalists argue that social structures such as organisations and institutions exist as long as they provide a function (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022a). An organisation, as a social structure, depends entirely on its own function (Spencer, 1898), and the various social needs determine the function of a social structure (Malinowski, 1944). In categorising a structure, the function performed by the structure can be used as a criterion (Parsons, 1951, p. 63), which is the approach used here.

2.2 Tour Operators

Tourism is a system that fulfils the function of a series of related elements in a specific process (Gunesch, 2017; Leiper, 1979). In this system, tour operators play a significant intermediary role as one actor in the tourist geography model (Holloway, 1992; Gartner & Bachri, 1994). A tour operator is an organisation, firm, or company that organizes and provides tours as a product for tourists to deliver them to and/or enable them to stay in places which are other than their usual residence (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001; Rao & Saha, 2016; Shekhawat, 2020; Yarcan & Çetin, 2021). A tour operator establishes a tour by integrating or combining several services and products that individually are separate tour elements (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001; Zykova, 2017). The role of tour operators is crucial in tourism because they bring together the demand and supply sides of tourism (Deveraja & Deepak, 2016).

The main contribution of tour operators in the tourism industry is in the field of tourist flow (Baldarelli, 2000; Gartner & Bachri, 1994). Tour operators have different functions (Holloway, 1992), with their primary services or products being transportation, accommodation, food services, entertainment, events, and attractions (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001; Bryant, 2022; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). While some tour operators provide services by renting facilities and equipment in bulk, others offer services through their

facilities (Holloway, 1992), and these services are provided in advance (Holloway, 1992; Shekhawat, 2020). In addition to a linking role between demand and supply, they also serve clients by providing services relating to safety and health issues stemming from various threats and difficulties potentially encountered during tours (Baldarelli, 2000; Kavitha, 2019; Shekhawat, 2020).

2.3 Hospitallers

The Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem is Christian more than 900 years old, serving people with the motto of *Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum* (Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller, 2022) and their members have been called Hospitallers since the Order was established (Buttigieg, 2014). Between 1080 and 1291, the administrative centre of the Hospitallers was located in the Holy Land, where its purpose was to cater to the various needs of pilgrims during their pilgrimage (Buttigieg, 2014; Duchesne, 2008; Riley-Smith, 2010; Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller, 2022). Since many historical documents and archaeological data related to Hospitallers have survived, the acts and roles they performed since their establishment can be reviewed (Riley-Smith, 2010).

Pilgrimage to Jerusalem from Western Europe increased during the 1000s (Jacoby, 2014). Around 1070, Amalfitant merchants received permission from the Caliph to establish a place to cater for Amalfitan pilgrims' needs, and they built a hospice for these pilgrims in Muristan, next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Buttigieg, 2014; Krüger & Heinzelman, 2021; Riley-Smith, 2010; Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller, 2022; William of Tyre, 1986). During its construction, attention was paid to making the hospice pilgrim-friendly (Riley-Smith, 2010). Following the completion of the building, a church dedicated to St. Mary of Latins, rooms for monks, and entertainment places for pilgrims were added, and the building became a sizeable complex (William of Tyre, 1986). Brethren also served pilgrims meals there (William of Tyre, 1986). Due to the increasing number of pilgrims, including those from other regions, the complex became insufficient in size. Consequently, the brethren of St. Mary of Latin built a hospital just to the west of the original complex to accommodate all pilgrims visiting the Holy Land (William of Tyre, 1986).

In 1113, Pope Paschal II issued the bull *Piae postulatio voluntatis* to the Blessed Gerard, who most probably was a professed member of the Hospitallers (Riley-Smith, 1967; Lagleder, 1983; Buttigieg, 2014). In the Bull, the complex was referred to as a *hospitalia* or *Xenodocheum*, which meant a *traveller's inn* at that time (Miller, 1978). Through the Bull, the Order of St. John of Jerusalem became an autonomous and protected institution, exempt from taxation and other obligations (Buttigieg, 2014; Lagleder, 1983). Blessed Gerard was appointed head of the institution as the organiser, guest master, and institutor (Buttigieg, 2014; Duchesne, 2008; Lagleder, 1983). When pilgrims died in the Holy Land, the brethren undertook their burial and carried out funeral rites (Riley-Smith, 2010). Hospitallers were by then also operating the St. Mary of Germans complex, which consisted of a hospice, a hospital, and a church (Jerusalem Foundation, 2020; Pringle, 2007). Their services to pilgrims extended not only to Jerusalem but also included the establishment of an infirmary in Aqua Bella, a location on the pilgrimage route (Boas, 2001), as well as the operation of funeral services and the construction of a chapel in Acre (Riley-Smith, 2010). Hospitallers' care for pilgrims became a primary duty throughout the 13th century (Riley-Smith, 2004).

One of the modes of transportation used by pilgrims to travel was by ship along the Mediterranean coasts, which was the most economical way (Jacoby, 2007). The increase in pilgrimage between the 11th and 15th centuries, along with the growth in ship size, led to the contemporaneous development of specialised ports and larger ships to accommodate the growing numbers of pilgrims (Jacoby, 2016). In his travel book, Ibn Jubayr, a Muslim pilgrim who travelled by ship, states that he sailed in a ship carrying 2000 pilgrims (Ibn Jubayr, 1952). The transportation of pilgrims by ship, which was traditionally combined with cargo, became so developed and large that carrying tourists alone became just as profitable (Jacoby, 2016).

Hospitallers almost inevitably became transporters of pilgrims in the Mediterranean (Bronstein, 2005; Jacoby, 2007, 2014, 2016), utilising both their ships and chartered vessels (Jacoby, 2007). Hospitallers obtained privileged permission to carry *peregrine* (which means crusaders and pilgrims) from the Sicilian authority in 1197 (Winkelmann, 1964). The Hospitallers also had access to many sources of wood for shipbuilding, and Marseilles was their main port of supply (Bronstein, 2005). Sources indicate that the competition between the Order and private carriers for the transport of pilgrims was so intense that the Marseille administration imposed a limit of 6,000 pilgrims on the Order in 1223 (Jacoby, 2016). In addition to marine transportation, since the time of Blessed Gerard, the Hospitallers had also set up hostels for pilgrims to the Holy Land from Provence and Italy (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Those hospices and estates, located along strategic

points of the Roman road system, represented a transport network system for pilgrims from central and northern Europe to key port cities (Mercieca, 2008).

3 Methodology

This study aims to clarify the situation in that specific case by comparing the recorded actions of the Hospitallers with the accepted functions of travel agents, using a systematic literature review. For this purpose, to search for keywords, the following databases were consulted: ScienceDirect, Scopus, Web of Science, SAGE Publications, EBSCOHost (Hospitality & Tourism Complete), Emerald, and ProQuest. The main reason for selecting these databases is the convenience of accessing the sources through the university library database. The terms selected were "Hospitallers," "tour operator," and "functionalism" as primary keywords. Because these terms are independent, they were searched separately. The search was conducted between June 2022 and June 2023 by all three researchers.

The structure of this research follows the principles of a systematic literature review, utilising a specific protocol for evidence data subject to new interpretation (Peričić & Tanveer, 2019). A systematic literature review is a method that seeks to gather evidence to clarify a specific question (Mengist et al., 2020; Torgerson, 2003). This methodological approach is the main difference between a systematic and narrative literature review (Rother, 2007). The process in a systematic literature review can be summarised as formulating the problem, searching the literature, screening for inclusion, assessing quality, extracting data, and analysing and synthesising data (Templier & Paré, 2015). The stages of research should be clearly defined, the state of compliance of the information with the criteria should be explicitly stated, and care should be taken to ensure minimal bias (Patole, 2021). The consensus of researchers can be utilized as a measurement by which to reach minimum bias (Noordzij et al., 2009).

Systematic literature reviews can be divided into two types (Xiao & Watson, 2017). The first type can be utilized for establishing a theoretical context for an empirical study (Templier & Paré, 2015). The second type can be used to reconsider existing accepted knowledge, interpret it, question it, and evaluate it (Rosseau et al., 2008). A systematic literature review can also reveal that what is generally accepted may be untrue (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

In this regard, this study can be counted as the second type of systematic literature review. In other words, since the main starting point for tour operators is the Grand Tour of Thomas Cook, this study was conducted to determine whether we can reconsider this knowledge within the context of the Hospitaller tradition before Thomas Cook. Thus, the research question of this study is whether Hospitallers during the first period of their history (between 1080 and 1291) operated as a tour operator from the perspective of the functionalist approach. To understand the answer, literature dealing with three issues,

i) functionalism,
ii) sovereign order, and
iii) tour operators,

was reviewed. In forming the inclusion criteria, the functions of tour operators were analysed.

A typical functionalist approach, which focuses on the operational processes of a structure and the operational processes it maintains (Bredemeier, 1955), has been used to understand functions. In this way, the functions of tour operators have been identified and are shown in Table 1. Following this, the inclusion criteria of Hospitallers (Table 2) were reviewed using the functionalist approach of tour operators. Then, the literature about Hospitallers was reviewed in the light of the inclusion criteria and other inclusions illustrated in the tables (See Table 2). To minimise bias during inclusion, the consensus of researchers was sought, and every function was peer-reviewed and achieved consensus concerning the accuracy of the information recorded as per the advice of Noordzij et al. (2009).

Based on the information in Table 1, the function of a tour operator includes at least two of the following services: transportation, accommodation, entertainment, providing food, and ensuring safety and health (operational process) for maintaining flows of tourists from tourist-generating locations to a destination.

The function of a tour operator, as described above, can then be used to compare whether any other structure has the same function. The first column in Table 2 illustrates relevant information about Hospitallers selected from the literature. For achieving comprehension, the second column has been formed from inclusion criteria, which are the same as those of the function of tour operators. Minimising the bias about the accuracy of relevant information and whether the authors discussed the information fitted with the functions of tour operators. Only information on which they reached a consensus with respect to accuracy is included (as per the advice of Noordzij et al., 2009). In the extraction part (3rd column) of Table 2, remarks on information and extractions have been included.

Table 1: Functions of tour operators.

SELECTED INFORMATION	INCLUSION CRITERIA 1	INCLUSION CRITERIA 2	EXTRACTION
	What is the operation process of a tour operator?	**What does the operation process make sustain?**	**If the information has been identified in the inclusion criteria, what are the remarks to be extracted?**
"It buys individual travel services, such as air transportation, accommodation, and destination services from suppliers such as carriers, hotels, and ground operators, and matches these constituents to produce organized tours and inclusive holidays" (Yarcan & Çetin, 2021: 14).	-Providing Transportation -Providing Accommodation	Not Mentioned	-Brings together supply and demand -Providing transportation and accommodation to tourists -Functions have been conducted by using external suppliers -Use of external resources like carriers, hotels
"Tour operators provide accommodation, meals, and entertainment" (Bryant, 2022).	-Providing Accommodation -Providing Food -Providing Entertainment	Not Mentioned	-Providing transportation, food, entertainment, and accommodation
"Tour operators are businesses that combine two or more travel services (e.g., transport, accommodation, meals, entertainment, sightseeing, etc.) and sell them through travel agencies or directly to final consumers as a single product (called a package tour) for a global price" (OECD,2001).	-Providing Accommodations -Providing Transportation - Providing Food -Providing Entertainment, events and attractions, and miscellaneous services	Not Mentioned	- Providing transportation, food, entertainment, and accommodation to tourists by using internal or external suppliers -It brings together supply and demand
"Tour operator (also called tour wholesalers) makes a package of a tour and its components and sells the ready tour package either through their own company or via retail outlets and approved retail travel agencies" (Zykova, 2017: 8).	-Enabling tourists to benefit from the components of a tour	Not Mentioned	-It presents components of a tour by using internal or external sources like retail outlets and agencies -Tour operators bring together supply and demand
-*"The largest tour companies now run their charter airlines"* (Holloway, 1992: 37). - *"Some larger tour operators also operate their hotels abroad"* (Holloway, 1992: 38).	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	-Internal or external suppliers have conducted functions -Tour operators achieve supplies in advance
"Tour operator is an organisation, firm, or company who buys individual travel components separately from their suppliers and combines them into a package tour, which is sold with its price tag to the public directly or through an	-Achieving components and combining them -Presenting components to tourists	Not Mentioned	-A tour operator brings supply and demand together

intermediary is called a Tour Operator" (Shekhawat, 2020: 15). *"They buy in bulk, resulting in cheaper inventory costs"* (Shekhawat, 2020: 18). Significantly, a tour operator ought to provide services that are about safety and health (like insurance) for their clients beyond standard touristic services (Shekhawat, 2020: 23)	-Benefits from big-scale economy -Providing Safety and Health services like insurance		-A tour operator can be organised as a different form of structure like a firm, a company, or a different organization -Tour operators achieve supplies in advance -Tour operators provide services for tourist safety and health
In addition to classic services, tour operators also provide safety and health services (Kavitha, 2019).	Safety and health insurance during the tour	Not Mentioned	-Tour operators provide services for tourist safety and health
Sectors which is operated are transportation, accommodation, events, entertainment, food services, and attractions (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009).	Providing transportation, accommodation, events, entertainment, food services, and attractions	Not Mentioned	-A comprehensive expression of tour operators' activity
Tour operators' main distribution to the tourism system is maintaining tourist flow (Balderelli, 2000).	Not Mentioned	-Flow of tourists	-Balderelli's information indicates the maintenance feature of tour operators
In the tourism system, tour operators are one of the functioning components that contribute to the outcomes of tourism (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009: 13,17).	Not Mentioned	-Flow of tourists	-Tour operators are components in the tourism system -The tour operator is a factor in a successful tourism process

Source: Authors.

Table 2. *The functions of Hospitallers compared to the functions of tour operators.*

SELECTED INFORMATION ABOUT HOSPITALLERS	INCLUSION CRITERIA 1	INCLUSION CRITERIA 2	EXTRACTION AND REMARKS
	OPERATIONAL PROCESS OF TOUR OPERATORS (Providing Transportation, Accommodation, Food Services, Entertainment, Safety and Health services, and Miscellaneous Services)	WHAT OPERATIONAL PROCESSES MAINTAIN (Flow of tourists)	
-Hospitallers were operating hospices for pilgrims in Jerusalem (William of Tyre, 1986: 123).	-Providing accommodation	Not Mentioned	-Hospitallers conduct more than two operational processes which tour operators carry out. -The operational process is carried out by brethren who are cult members. So, the supply mechanism is internal.
- Hospitallers operated a complex with the hospice, a church dedicated to St. Mary of Latins, rooms for monks, and entertainment places for pilgrims (William of Tyre, 1986: 815).	-Providing Entertainment		
-Hospitallers also served pilgrims meals in the same complex (William of Tyre, 1986, p. 816).	-Providing food services		
-Hospitallers was running a hospital just west of the complex for every pilgrim visiting the Holy Land (William of Tyre, 1986: 815-816).	-Providing health services		
-Between 1080 and 1291, the administrative centre of Hospitallers was in the Holy Land, and its purpose was to meet the various needs of the pilgrims during the pilgrimage (Sovereign Order, 2022).	Not Mentioned	-Maintain the flow of pilgrims	-Information indicates the purpose of the operational processes of the Hospitallers. This implies maintaining the character of Hospitallers.

(Continued)

Table 2. *(Continued)*

Hospitallers ran a hospice in Muristan, close to the holy Sepulchure (Sovereign Order, 2022).	-Providing accommodation	Not Mentioned	-Establishing and operating a hospice for pilgrims fits with one of the operational processes of a tour operator.
During the first period of the history of Hospitallers (1080-1291), the order's activities are for fulfilling the needs of pilgrims (Buttigieg, 2014).	Not Mentioned	-Flow of pilgrims	-Fulfilling the needs of pilgrims maintains the flow of pilgrims -Establishing and operating a hospice for pilgrims fits with one of the operational processes of a tour operator.
Hospitallers' hospice in Muristan and its establishing process have been found again in Buttigieg's study (Buttigieg, 2014).	-Providing Accommodation	Not Mentioned	
It has never been a predominantly military institution. Their primary purpose was fulfilling the needs of pilgrims in the first period of Hospitallers history (Riley-Smith, 2004)	Not Mentioned	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Their feature of being a military organization is misunderstood (Duchesne, 2008: viii). Their functional element of maintenance is the flow of pilgrims.
Hospitallers' purpose is serving to various needs of pilgrims in the Holy Land in the first period of Hospitallers' history (Duchesne, 2008: 41)	Not Mentioned	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Hospitallers' primary purpose indicates what Hospitallers maintains
Between 1080-1291, in the Holy Land, the services of Hospitallers were for fulfilling the needs of pilgrims (Riley-Smith, 2010)	Not Mentioned	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Hospitallers' activities were maintaining the flow of pilgrims between 1080-1291
Hospitallers operating hospices in the Holy Land for serving to pilgrims (Riley-Smith, 2010)	-Providing accommodation	Partly Mentioned	-Operating a hospice for pilgrims fits with one of the operational processes of a tour operator
During the construction of the hospices in the Holy Land, a special effort was made to make the architecture pilgrim-friendly (Riley-Smith, 2010).	Not Mentioned	-Flow of Tourist	-Efforts in building a pilgrim-friendly hospice is a reason to think that Hospitallers maintained an element of functioning, namely the flow of pilgrims
When pilgrims died in the holy land, they performed burial of them and carried out funeral rites (Riley-Smith, 2010: 21)	-Miscellaneous service	Not Mentioned	Considering the importance of religious rituals for medieval people, it can be concluded that this Hospitallers service was precious for pilgrims.

(Continued)

Table 2. *(Continued)*

Hospitallers performed funeral activities and erected and ran a chapel in Acre for pilgrims (Riley-Smith, 2010: 23).	-Miscellaneous services	Not Mentioned	Hospitallers were providing infrastructure for the religious rituals of pilgrims. This matches to miscellaneous service of a tour operator.
Hospitallers operated a hospice in Holy Land for pilgrims (Krüger & Heinzelman, 2021).	-Providing Accommodation	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Operating a hospice for pilgrims fits with one of the operational processes (Accommodation) of a tour operator. Internal source (Run by their members)
In 1113, Pope Paschal II gave the bull *Piae postulatio voluntatis** to the Blessed Gerard, who had been most probably a professed member of the St. Mary of Latin (Riley-Smith, 1967; Lagleder, 1983). The bull, given by Rome, the complex where Hospitallers had been operating, was mentioned as hospitalia and Xenodocheum, which meant a "traveller inn" at that time (Miller, 1978).	-Providing Accommodation -Providing Health services	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Internal source (Run by their members) -Their acts, which the Pope blessed, were intended to fulfill the needs of pilgrims. When Hospitallers had a bull from the Pope, they became an official institution (a social structure) for maintaining the flow of pilgrims. It matches maintaining an element of a tour operator -Providing accommodation and health services match with the operational processes of a tour operator
Hospitallers operated the St. Mary of Germans complex, which consists of a hospice, a hospital, and a church (Pringle, 2007; Jerusalem Foundation, 2020).	-Providing Accommodation -Providing Health Services -Providing Miscellaneous services	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Providing accommodation, health services, and miscellaneous services matches the operational processes of a tour operator -Hospitallers facilities were run by their members
Hospitallers also run an infirmary for pilgrims in Aqua Bella (Boas, 2001).	-Providing health services	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Providing health services matches the operational process of a tour operator. Internal source (Run by their member)

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Table 2. *(Continued)*

			operational processes of tour operators.
The contribution of Hospitallers is taking care of pilgrims by protecting routes for pilgrims against threats to pilgrims' lives and properties, providing shipping, and healing sick pilgrims in their hospitals (Beveridge & O'Gorman, 2012).	-Providing Safety -Providing health services -Providing transportation	-Flows of pilgrims in between generating geography and destination	-Attempts to provide services related to pilgrims are the same as the attitude of modern tour operator organizations.
PAPAL BULL (Pope Paschal II., 1113) - *"By the authority of this our present decree, that that house of God, your Hospital, shall now be placed, and shall forever remain, under the protection of the Apostolic See."*	-Providing health services -Bearing in mind hospitalia means not only a hospital but also a traveller inn, Hospitallers provide accommodation	-Flow of Pilgrims	-By this bull, Hospitallers gained legitimacy
PAPAL BULL (Pope Paschal II., 1113) - *"All things whatsoever, therefore, which by your preserving care and solicitude have been collected for the benefit of the said Hospital, for the support and maintenance of pilgrims, or for relieving the necessities of the poor, whether in the churches of Jerusalem or those of parishes within the limits of other cities."*	-Providing health services -Bearing in mind hospitalia means not only the hospital but also traveller inn, Hospitallers provide accommodation	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Fulfilling the needs of pilgrims was directly addressed by the bull. It is significant in terms of showing the maintenance role of Hospitallers
PAPAL BULL (Pope Paschal II., 1113) - *"whatsoever goods have been, or shall be granted to thee, or thy successors, or to the brethren who are occupied in the care and support of pilgrims, by the venerable brethren the bishops of the diocese of Jerusalem; we hereby decree shall be retained by you and undiminished."*	-Not mentioned	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Papal bull demonstrates that Hospitaller (called brethren in this passage) was an organisation to fulfil the needs of pilgrims
PAPAL BULL (Pope Paschal II., 1113) - *"Furthermore, all dignities or possessions which your Hospital at present holds either on this side of the water, in Asia, or Europe, as also those which hereafter by God's bounty it may obtain; we confirm them to you and to your successors, who shall devote themselves with pious zeal to the cares of hospitality, and through you to the said Hospital in perpetuity."*	-Providing health services -Bearing in mind hospitalia means not only the hospital but also traveller inn, Hospitallers provide accommodation	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Bull demonstrates that activities of Hospitallers were not only in the Holy Land but also in Asia and Europe in 1113

(Continued)

Table 2. *(Continued)*

			operational processes of tour operators.
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PAPAL BULL (Pope Paschal II., 1113) - *"All things whatsoever, therefore, which by your preserving care and solicitude have been collected for the benefit of the said Hospital, for the support and maintenance of pilgrims, or for relieving the necessities of the poor, whether in the churches of Jerusalem or those of parishes within the limits of other cities."*	-Providing health services -Bearing in mind hospitalia means not only the hospital but also traveller inn, Hospitallers provide accommodation	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Fulfilling the needs of pilgrims was directly addressed by the bull. It is significant in terms of showing the maintenance role of Hospitallers
PAPAL BULL (Pope Paschal II., 1113) - *"whatsoever goods have been, or shall be granted to thee, or thy successors, or to the brethren who are occupied in the care and support of pilgrims, by the venerable brethren the bishops of the diocese of Jerusalem; we hereby decree shall be retained by you and undiminished."*	-Not mentioned	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Papal bull demonstrates that Hospitaller (called brethren in this passage) was an organisation to fulfil the needs of pilgrims
PAPAL BULL (Pope Paschal II., 1113) - *"Furthermore, all dignities or possessions which your Hospital at present holds either on this side of the water, in Asia, or Europe, as also those which hereafter by God's bounty it may obtain; we confirm them to you and to your successors, who shall devote themselves with pious zeal to the cares of hospitality, and through you to the said Hospital in perpetuity."*	-Providing health services -Bearing in mind hospitalia means not only the hospital but also traveller inn, Hospitallers provide accommodation	-Flow of Pilgrims	-Bull demonstrates that activities of Hospitallers were not only in the Holy Land but also in Asia and Europe in 1113
PAPAL BULL (Pope Paschal II., 1113) *"As to the Hospitals or Poor Houses in the Western provinces, in the Borgo of St.Egidio, Asti, Pisa, Bari, Otranto, Taranto, and Messina, which are distinguished by the title of Hospitals of Jerusalem, we decree that they shall forever remain, as they are this day, under the subjection and disposal of yourself and your successors."*	-Providing health services -Bearing in mind hospitalia means not only the hospital but also traveller inn, Hospitallers provide accommodation	Not Mentioned	-Bull demonstrates how the vast geography of Hospitallers operations was held

Source: Authors.

* *Piae postulatio voluntatis is a significant official document from which we learn about the acts that Hospitallers conducted. This bull was a milestone for officially extending their activities (operational processes) into Europe.*

4 Findings and Results

Above, two different tables are shown. Table 1 presents the research on tour operators and their functions published between 1992 and 2022. On the other hand, Table 2 presents the research track on the functions of Hospitallers compared to those of tour operators, published between 2013 and 2022. In both tables, there are four columns. In the first column, the reference sources are located. Then, in the second and third columns, the inclusion criteria 1 and 2. While the inclusion criteria 1 represent the functions of tour operators, the inclusion criteria 2 represent the sustainability of operations. And finally, in the fourth column, there is the extraction and remark part.

According to Table 2, Hospitallers played a multifaceted role during the medieval period, meeting the extensive needs of pilgrims. They ensured that passengers had safe passage and access to essential services, including healthcare and accommodation. This holistic approach to service delivery closely resembles the operations of contemporary tour operators, who also facilitate travel logistics, ensure guest safety, provide accommodations, and offer guided experiences. These activities highlight a continuity in critical aspects of travel facilitation from medieval times to the present. This comparison highlights the enduring nature of travel and accommodation services, revealing the historical origins of modern tourism practices. By examining the roles of the Hospitallers, we gain insight into the evolution of tourism and the persistent human need for organised travel services. This historical perspective enriches our understanding of how past practices have shaped contemporary tourism, highlighting the long-standing tradition of facilitating travel for cultural, religious, and recreational purposes.

Historical records and research about the Hospitallers reveal clearly that their functions included providing transportation, accommodation, food, assistance in safety and health, and other miscellaneous services such as arranging events and entertainment (operational processes), and that they conducted those activities to meet the needs of pilgrims travelling between their origins and destinations.

As a result, even if the prevailing understanding now acknowledges that the portrayal of the Hospitallers primarily as a military institution was a misconception, it is occasionally conflated with other groups like the Knights Templar. Similar to any organisation, the Hospitallers served distinct functions. Upon evaluating their roles, it becomes evident that during their initial operational phase (from 1080 to 1291), the Hospitallers functioned significantly as tour operators in the Medieval Age. Beyond their traditional roles in providing care and shelter to pilgrims and travellers, they facilitated and organised journeys, ensuring safe passage and accommodation across distant lands. This broader perspective reveals the Hospitallers' integral role not just in military affairs but also in the logistical and hospitality aspects of medieval travel and pilgrimage.

5 Discussion

According to Table 1, tour operators' functions include at least two services: transportation, accommodation, entertainment, food provision, and ensuring safety (operational process) to maintain tourist flows between destinations. These functions were taken from the literature cited in this study, as stated by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2001), Bryant (2022), and Goeldner and Ritchie (2009). According to these studies, while some definitions directly include the functions in question, others do not, and in some cases, the functions are not clearly stated; they are interpretable. Regarding sustainability, it has been determined that a very minority of studies include efforts to maintain tourist flow. When it comes to making extractions from issues where definitions are incomplete, the most important issue seems to be that tour operators bring the supply and demand sides together. Additionally, functions not directly included in the definitions are the main extractions.

Accepting that pilgrimage was a form of tourism, medieval pilgrims were an early form of tourists (Digance, 2003). The information in Table 2 undisputedly shows that the functions of modern tour operators and those of Hospitallers are the same. Besides, the sustaining operation of the flow of tourists is the flow of pilgrims, as shown in Table 2.

According to Herakleitos (Robinson, 1987), every phenomenon tends to change over time, and that process follows a path that can be traced. The only way to learn how and why a phenomenon changes over time is to understand the factors that induced a change in the past. This issue must be directly addressed in the context of tourism history, where a historical approach has been lacking (Walton, 2005). A result of that can lead to conclusions that some of the social structures of tourism, such as tour operators, are products of the modern (i.e., post-Industrial Revolution) world, when in fact they were first established much earlier.

While early documents (Papal Bull in 1113 and William of Tyre) mentioned the accommodation, protection, and

caring of pilgrims, the first document that records the earliest transportation activities of Hospitallers is dated to 1156 (Jacoby, 2007). Therefore, in terms of functionalism, pilgrims' accommodation, health, and protection needs preceded transportation services in the early years of the Hospitallers. The organisation and operations of the Hospitallers evolved dynamically over time. Their activities expanded in response to the changing needs and growing numbers of pilgrims, reflecting a broader scope of services. This developmental trajectory illustrates how the Hospitallers adapted and expanded their operations to meet the evolving demands of pilgrims, demonstrating a multifaceted approach to hospitality and logistical support during the medieval period.

The evolution of tourism as a system has been significantly influenced by its environment and historical context. While Pilgrimage was an early primary form of tourism during the Middle Ages, pilgrimage is of relatively less significance in modern tourism (although still important in terms of numbers involved). This may be because, unlike now, in the Medieval Age, religion and its institutions were the major instruments that shaped daily life, values, and motivations of ordinary people (Ershov et al., 2019). Travel and tourism in the present era encompass far more motivations and purposes than in the Middle Ages. Yet, the basic activities and roles of tour operators have remained remarkably similar over several hundred years, even if their procedures and methods have undergone significant changes.

6 Conclusions and Implications

As a result of this study, in the light of all these historical records, the Hospitallers, a medieval military and religious order, performed several key operational processes and functions akin to those of modern tour operators, primarily aimed at maintaining the flow of pilgrims. To provide this, they had several functions such as offering accommodation and health services, similar to the services provided by tour operators for accommodation services; offering miscellaneous services, fulfilling various needs of pilgrims, akin to modern tour operators for health and miscellaneous services; facilitating transportation for pilgrims, which was conducted on an industrial level and officially approved by the Pope for the transportation services. They were an official institution, blessed by the Pope, with internal supply mechanisms managed by their members, and their activities extended beyond the Holy Land to Asia and Europe, demonstrating a wide operational geography. Their primary purpose was to maintain the flow of pilgrims, fulfilling their needs and ensuring safe and efficient pilgrimages. The Papal Bull granted them legitimacy and recognised their role in maintaining the pilgrimage routes.

6.1 Research Implications

A tour operator organisation is a typical example of a social structure. The exact social structures of tourism in the past and how those structures evolved over the historical process represent a considerable gap in the tourism literature. Revealing the origins of tour operators in the Medieval Ages is just one element that this study resolves. Every structure depends on its function, and the application of functionalism is crucial in understanding structures related to tourism, both past and present. New and valuable information can be revealed through the interdisciplinary collaboration of tourism, history, and sociology. Therefore, researchers may be advised to go beyond stereotypical definitions and conduct more origin-focused research by starting from the ground up, utilising other disciplines such as history, sociology, and anthropology.

This research consisted of research published only in English due to the language barrier, which is a limitation of the study. Therefore, researchers proficient in multiple languages may be recommended to expand the study by including studies prepared in other languages.

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