

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE TOURISM FACILITIES WITHIN THE ROMANIAN PILGRIMAGES PLACES

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Religious pilgrimages have a real history as economic generators for the visited areas and the elements of supply involved. Romanian monasteries are experiencing some continuous and constant flows of pilgrims, but, at the same time, they also turned into attractions for mass tourism. The aim of this paper is to identify tourism facilities and to establish their development level. The research method of this study was a questionnaire based survey among more than one hundred monasteries' superiors from different regions of Romania, places known as "holy" destinations for the Romanian religious people.

Keywords: religious tourism, tourism facilities, religious sites management, Romanian monasteries.

JEL classification: L83, M10, M21, R10.

1. Introduction

Tourism is a complex phenomenon regarded as an engine in many countries and areas which became one of the economic activities most spread worldwide (Bazini and Nedelea, 2008). The development of spiritual journeys coincided with the development of tourism in the modern era. Even though industry and "its related practices interact with religious life and religious institutions, hypothetically, in every corner of the world" (Bremer, 2005, p.37), *religious tourism is one of the least studied fields in tourism researches* (Vukonić, 2002).

Moreover, as a result of marketing programmes and of the high interest in cultural tourism, religious sites are more and more visited by rather curiosity-driven visitors as compared to genuine pilgrims and this is the reason why *they are promoted, adapted and comprised in products meant for tourism market* (Timothy and Boyd, 2003).

Moreover, many tour operators think that for an individual or a tourist is not mandatory to be very religious to make a journey or to enjoy visiting some attractions endowed with religious significance (Stoykova, 2009). Also the differences between pilgrims and tourists at sacred sites are vanishing, as new similarities are emerging (Collins-Kreiner, 2010).

At the same time, *the structure of the services supplied within religious attractions have changed*, as it was aimed at their adaptation and diversification according to the needs shown by various types of visitors or categories of the general public.

Therefore, *the purpose of this work* is to establish the development level of tourism facilities and the percentage share of each activity of a different nature than religious found in the main places of pilgrimage for Orthodox spirituality, which is the majority religion in Romania, yet regarded as traditionalist and conservative as compared to other denominations.

2. The tourism facilities within the religious travel

A number of economic realities determined the religious settlements to obtain funds by means of trade, collection of entrance fees and provision of some restoration services, guide or accommodation. As for religious tourism, in certain areas, the demand for services from the part of tourists and pilgrims changed the environment, the structure of local economy, while urbanization followed the track of pilgrimage centres.

Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal are clear examples as in these cases pilgrimage area can be divided in two: commercial or profane area made up of restaurants, shops, hotels etc. and the sacred area comprising churches, sanctuaries for pilgrimages etc. (Gesler, 1996). Lourdes' urban design has considerably changed in the sense of agglomeration of souvenir shops and restaurants lined all along the road connecting the commercialized area of the city to the pilgrimage area of the city (Rinschede, 1986). Following the same line of ideas, the number of hotels in Lourdes exceeds 200 units, starting from 4**** (stars) and up to 1* (star), without counting for „bed & breakfast” accommodation units and other residence to rent. In Romania, the number of boarding houses in the close neighbourhood of one monastery highly renowned, for instance Humor of Bucovina, exceeds 20 units.

Souvenir shops adjacent to many religious objectives have a more significant economic importance. In many cases, these are owned by the religious organization in charge with that respective destination, but often, these belong to local communities. *The souvenirs which are most looked for and sold are those representing religious symbolism*, especially if they can be associated with the place or the events that occurred at the place of purchase (Timothy, 2006). Objects which are more often traded in Christian religious sites are crosses, icons (this is especially the case with Orthodox Christians), statues (mainly in the case of Roman-Catholics), books, postcards, holy water or myrtle, rosaries, little things made by hand and handicrafts.

Like any other tourist, pilgrims must spend the night somewhere. *Accommodation means to which they resort vary from tents, little guest houses, houses for pilgrims up to luxury hotels.*

A special situation is encountered among religious settlements providing accommodation services within their own premises as is the case of the Romanian monastic complexes of Nicula, Neamț, Afteia, Portărița, etc. which are offering more than 100 accommodation beds each or the case of Bârsana monastery, which besides the accommodation beds within the monastic complex has its own tourist villa. Accommodation within the premises of the religious site is a rather frequent practice also in Guadalupe, Mexico, Medjugorge, Jerusalem etc., and in the case of monasteries or temples.

People may be provided a meal within the premises of Romanian pilgrimage sites, even within the premises of monastic settlements, while some settlements have a capacity to provide meals of more than 300 seats (Rohița Monastery of Maramureș County or Sănmărtinu de Câmpie of Mureș County). But many of them do not have fees for these services. It is the choice of every person to pay a certain amount of money for these services.

2. Study methodology and objectives

The main objective of the study were to identify tourism facilities existing within the central attractions for religious tourism in Romania and the activities carried out here which could turn into attractions, but, at the same time they represent means to obtain the financial resources which are necessary for the preservation of the religious settlement. The hypotheses from which the study started aimed at:

- *H1.Existence of some significant differences concerning the development level of facilities provided to visitors according to the identification features of the monastic complex.*
- *H2.Existence of some significant differences concerning the activities provided according to the identification features of the monastic complex.*

Therefore, the population investigated has been made up by all Orthodox monasteries all throughout Romania, while the sampling unit has been represented by the monastic settlement by means of the abbot, as its representative and the person in charge with the place.

Based on the sampling frame identified by means of the Directory of Orthodox Monasteries of Romania, we excluded the monasteries located in larger cities in order to identify with precision the locations where the demand is exclusively or mainly oriented towards religious tourism attraction. Moreover, we took into consideration the lack of permanent inhabitants within monasteries and paid a special attention to monasteries specified in tourism guide books as these monasteries, by their very nature meet at a larger extent the purpose of this survey aiming at identifying the features of religious tourism supply. As a method of data collection we used “face to face” punctual survey at the site of monastic settlement. With respect to data collection tool, we opted for a questionnaire.

Sample size comprised 151 monasteries. The choice of the units within the sample was made, in the first stage, according to a probabilistic method: the areal method. Thus, we divided the territory into 6 areas corresponding to the 6 Metropolis Community Churches, and from these we counted out 3 areas from where we were to inquire all the units. It was impossible to inquire all the units in every area due to high expenses for travelling, so we applied convenience sampling. Sample structure is outlined in the table below (Table 1):

Table 1. Sample characteristics

<i>Monastery Type</i>		<i>Percent</i>	<i>Metropolis Churches</i>		<i>Percent</i>
Monks		51.08%	Ardeal Metropolis Church		6.47%
Nuns		48.92%	Muntenia and Dobruđja Metropolis Church		2.88%
<i>Monastery Size</i>			Moldavia and Bucovina Metropolis Church		15.11 %
1- 5 members		34.71%	Oltenia Metropolis Church		7.19%
(5-10] members		19.01%	Banat Metropolis Church		10.79%
(10-15] members		15.70%	Cluj, Alba, Crişana and Maramureş Metropolis Church		57.55%
(15-20] members		7.44%			
(20-25] members		6.61%			
More than 25 members		16.53%			

3. Research results

The first set of questions aimed at establishing the accommodation facilities within monasteries as well as their structure. Thus, more than 61.00% of religious settlements have accommodation facilities within the monastery (generally, within a single building called “guest house”), the number of beds ranging between 3 and 200. In the case of most of them, people are not charged for accommodation services as it is a service free of charge. However, pilgrims make donations and leave money most of times for these services. Percentage share of accommodation facilities and fees are listed in the table below (Table 2):

Table 2. Analysis of accommodation facilities existing within monastic settlements

<i>Type of accommodation services</i>			<i>Number of beds</i>	<i>Room type</i>	<i>Remarks on fees</i>
<i>Within the monastic complex</i>	Yes	61.80%	M= 43.44 (n=73) S=3171	1,2,3,4,5,6,8, 10,12,15,20, 25 beds	Average price per night = 10. 83 lei (2.5 Euro);(n=73) * at 77.30% of monasteries, accommodation is free of charge
	No	38.20%			
<i>Outside the monastic</i>	Yes	13.00%	M=60.31 (n=16) S=784	1,2,3,4,6,7,8, 10,20 beds	Average price per night = 31. 10 lei (8 Euro); (n=16) *at 20.00% of units, accommodation
	No	87.00%			

<i>complex</i>					<i>is free of charge</i>
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M= Average of the number of accommodation beds; S=Sum of the number of accommodation beds

Only 13.00% of the monastic settlements subject to our study have accommodation facilities located outside the monastery (we referred here to accommodation units which are within the property of the monastery or are run by monastery's inhabitants) and the number of beds within these accommodation units ranges between 15 and 150 beds. These units located in the close neighbourhood of monasteries usually take the form of chalets, villas, pilgrim houses or motels. Fees generally vary.

We have to underline that the rules regarding monastic life do not allow a layman (a person not belonging to clergy) to spend more than 3 consecutive nights in the monastic complex. For these reasons, some monasteries decided to build accommodation units where such rules do not apply. In case of Bârsana Monastery, for instance, a three-star villa was built having almost 54 beds in double and single rooms with phone, fax and PC access.

Some of monasteries' abbots stated that the existing accommodation beds within monastic complexes are sometimes not enough. Therefore, during peak periods, especially in the summer, the demand exceeds the existing supply to spend the night within religious settlements. In the case of Bârsana monastery, for instance, it is mandatory to make a prior reservation for an accommodation bed during summer time, one month prior to arrival at the least.

We continued by examining meal providing related facilities (restoration services) existing within monastic complexes (Table 3). The research outlined that for more than 80% of the monasteries subject to our study, tourists or pilgrims may be provided a meal while for more than 15% of monasteries, visitors are provided a meal only if they are accommodated in one of monastery's facilities.

Table 3. Analysis of meal providing facilities existing within monastic settlements

<i>Possibilities to provide meals</i>	Non	19.51%	M=63.46 (n=89) S=5648	<i>There is a fixed schedule to provide a meal for 63.60% of monasteries.</i>	<i>Seats number</i>
	Yes, under all conditions	64.22%			33.71%: less than 20 seats;
	Yes, only if lodged	16.27%			43.82%: between 21 and 100 seats;
					22.47%: between 101 and 300 seats.
<i>- 13.79% of monasteries provide only meal without meat;</i> <i>- 86.21% of monasteries, except for fast days, visitors can be provided any kind of food (in certain cases without meat);</i> <i>- In certain monasteries, people suffering from various diseases may be provided special meals.</i>					

M=Average of the number of seats to be provided a meal; S=Sum of the number of seats to be provided a meal.

The following investigated aspects referred to the number of additional facilities existing within monastic settlements which are used on the one hand, but also expressly looked for, on the other hand, by tourists or other visitors.

The hypotheses from which the survey started- concerning the significant differences which might exist among facilities and activities of a different nature than a religious one which can be encountered or conducted within the main pilgrimage settlements according to their identification characteristics, they were tested by means of Pearson's correlation coefficient, specific to nominal variables.

The hypotheses taken into consideration were sub-divided each into 3 secondary hypotheses, concerning the influence of monastery type, size and Metropolis Church (administrative structure

of The Romanian Orthodox Church). The testing of these hypotheses allowed only their partial validation. Significant differences between these facilities emphasized two relationships of an average intensity as presented in the table below (Table 4):

Table 4. Additional facilities existing within monastic settlements and monastery characteristics influence

<i>Facilities existing within religious settlements</i>		<i>Influencing factors</i>	<i>Relationship intensity</i>
Souvenir / religious objects shop	70.50%	Monastery size	$C=0.375$ ($df=5$; $p=0.028<0.05$)
Arranged parking lot	43.40%	-	
Meeting/ conference room*	19.70%	Metropolis Church	$C=0.500$ ($df=5$; $p=0.013<0.05$)
Access to internet	11.50%	-	
Banking service (ATM, etc.)**	0.80%	-	

(C= Pearson's correlation coefficient; p= Significance level of study)

*more frequent in Cluj, Alba, Crişana and Maramureş Metropolis Church and Muntenia and Dobrudja Metropolis Church

**Bârsana Monastery

The main facility encountered within more than 70% of the monasteries investigated (the extremes values were 100% for the monasteries with 10-15 members and 47.6% for small monasteries) aims at giving to all those visiting the monastery the chance to buy souvenirs or religious objects from specialized shops which are usually located at the entrance of monastic complexes.

In tight connection to the commercial side we *identified the activities of a different nature than a religious one, which are carried out within monastic settlements and which might represent a source of funds*, but also an attraction element for many visitors. Significant differences between the activities carried within the monasteries (especially in what concerns the monastery size and type) emphasized a number of relationships of an average intensity (Table 5).

Table 5. Activities of a different nature than religious carried out within monastic settlements and their influence on these activities

<i>Activities carried out within monasteries</i>		<i>Influencing factors</i>
Painting	29.50%	Monastery size: $C=0.383$ ($df=5$; $p=0.001<0.05$) Monastery type: $C=0.371$ ($df=1$; $p=0.000<0.05$)
Embroidery	14.90%	Monastery size: $C=0.334$ ($df=5$; $p=0.011<0.05$) Monastery type: $C=0.369$ ($df=1$; $p=0.000<0.05$)
Weaving	9.80%	Monastery type: $C=0.332$ ($df=1$; $p=0.000<0.05$)
Tailor' workshop	6.50%	Metropolis church: $C=0.574$ ($df=5$; $p=0.031<0.05$)
House-keeping and gardening	6.50%	-
Agriculture and animal breeding	5.70%	-
Sculpture	4.06%	Monastery type: $C=0.465$ ($df=1$; $p=0.023<0.05$)

(C= Pearson's correlation coefficient; p= Significance Level of study)

Thus, most activities carried out in a monastery, other than religious activities refer to painting, embroidery, weaving workshops (specific to monasteries of nuns and to large monasteries). Among other activities carried out by monastic settlements we can also mention the tailors'

workshops specializing in clerical clothes (specific to monks monasteries), rosaries, candles, objects made by hand, etc.

4. Conclusions and managerial implications

The investigation of tourism facilities existing within monasteries allowed the identification of the following essential issues:

- More than 60% of monasteries provide with accommodation services within the monastic complex, and 13% outside the complex in own villas, chalets, etc. Accommodation service within the monastery is free of charge for almost 80% of the monasteries subject to our study. Nevertheless we have to specify that tourists pay most of the times for these services on their own initiative in the form of donations, amounts to pay for church service, etc., while in the case of the units run by monasteries where these units are located outside the complex, accommodation fees amount to 30 lei (8 €) per night on an average.
- It is possible to be provided with a free meal at about 75% of the monasteries comprised in our study, sometimes only if the visitor is also accommodated within the monastery; more than half of the monasteries have a fixed schedule for meals and 20% of them provide only meal without meat.
- In more than 70% of the Romanian monasteries we can find souvenir shops; almost 40% of them have arranged parking lots, 20% have conference rooms, while 10% have access to the internet.
- Painting and embroidery are the main activities carried out within Romanian monasteries.
- Some of these facilities vary according to monastery type, size and Metropolis Church to which they belong.

Within such religious attraction settlements, people conduct a number of activities, *whether cultural or related to objects made by hand contributing to the raise of funds*. These activities represent also an attraction for visitors. Quite often, the sale of the objects made in monasteries is intended for foreigners who are more likely to appreciate their special beauty and authenticity. Issues related to religious tourism economy and commercial activities can also be found, in broad outline, in Romanian religious destinations, but on a smaller-size scale and not so much focused on the material side. One can also notice that the services and the facilities provided are at an incipient stage in the case of some religious settlements, generally smaller or less known, but in the case of other monasteries we can talk about a developed tourism and religious supply ranging from spiritual services to banking facilities or communication and information technology-related facilities.

Therefore, the *potential to develop these religious tourism attractions is extremely high*, although the crystallization of this market has hardly begun at domestic level. Nevertheless, we can talk of an ever increasing development and adaptation of the facilities provided by main places of pilgrimage as a response to a more and more diversified demand, as a significant integrant part of religious tourism phenomenon.

5. References

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