IMPLICATIONS OF COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY WITHIN MONASTIC SETTLEMENTS AS A WAY TO MAINTAIN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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Abstract
For hundreds years, people have been travelling to places deemed as sacred to meet or to worship Divinity. However, these travels with religious motivation or pilgrimages, which might be considered as the first form of tourism (Rinschede, 1992), were carried out without the possibility to measure the economic, social and environmental impact. Religion-motivated tourism is extremely important in many parts of the world (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). In Romania, religious ceremonies to celebrate Saints’ days as well as all the related places and relics represent places for prayer and meeting with God for millions of people. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the contributions which an increased number of visitors might have on religious settlements and the pertaining communities of Romania in the light of compliance with sustainable development principles and to identify the role that commercial activity plays within religious settlements and the way it affects the environment where it operates, from the point of view of people representing the religious tourist supply. In this respect, we carried out a questionnaire-based survey among the main monastic complexes indicating religious tourism potential and its commercial side to bring about benefits for the monastery and the community, the preservation and the accomplishment of the religious settlement’s spiritual mission.

Keywords: religious tourism; sustainable development; commercial activity; monastic settlement; needs

JEL Classification: L83, M10, N30, O10, Q01

Introduction
Liberalization, privatization and globalization brought about the emergence of highly dynamic competitive economic environment full of challenges. Nations, industries and companies try to get sustainable competitive advantages through cooperation in various fields. In the attempt to cope with generations’ current and future needs sustainable

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development aims at establishing a balance between short-term profit-oriented commitment and an environmental protection based on long-term vision. Sustainable tourism aims at reaching a balance between environmental protection, maintenance of cultural integrity and promotion of economic benefits in the developed countries as well as with emerging economies (Jayawardena et al., 2008).

Religion or spirituality-based tourism is highly important in many corners of the world: Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje in Europe, Makkah in Saudi Arabia, Kumbh Mela in India, etc. Thousands of millions of people travel every year all around the world to get closer to Divinity or for their personal spiritual accomplishment by visiting places worshipped as holy or sacred. Religion has long been a singular motivation for journeys and it is considered the oldest non-economic form to make journeys (Jackowski and Smith, 1992).

Jackowski (2000) estimates that around 240 million persons participate in pilgrimages every year, most of them being Christians, Muslims or Hindus. Religious journeys spread and became more and more famous in the last decades holding an important share of international tourism as it witnessed a significant increase both as absolute and relative values. Moreover, the continuous increase of this market segment seems to maintain also in the coming future (Jackowski, 2000; Holmberg, 1993; Russel, 1999; San Filippo, 2001).

The development of spiritual journeys coincided with tourism development in the modern era and even if industry and “its related practices interact with religious life and institutions hypothetically in every corner of the world” (Bremer, 2005), religious tourism is one of the least studied domains within tourist researches (Vukonić, 2006).

In relation to what was said above, an important issue to focus on is the fact that culture is the centre of each civilization while religion is considered the heart of culture in many societies. More than any other factor, religion conveys to culture a perception of reality in the broadest sense of the term and gives a more profound explanation of historical events as well as the place of humanity in history.

An example in this respect is regarding pilgrimages as a decisive factor contributing to the integration process in Europe and Goethe’s statement supports this idea „Europe was born in pilgrimage and its mother tongue is Christianity”. Moreover, Religion played a key role in the development and the way spare time was used in the course of centuries (Kelly, 1982), so that modern consumption habits, including journeys, cannot be fully understood without taking Religion into consideration (Mattila et al., 2001).

Though religion-motivated journeys are very old, they turned in the last years into a much larger and more segmented market, the market of religious tourism. Religious tourism can be defined as a specific form of tourism the participants of which are “motivated either partially or exclusively by religious reasons” (Rinschede, 1992). This is the generic approach which shall determine the scientific approach of the work especially the practical part of it, though there we shall also examine the tourists who came here by chance or had other reasons to visit religious places.

Speaking about the development and the extension of this phenomenon at the global level, of its turning into an industry, we must necessarily make researches on the way in which religious tourism and its spiritual, economic, cultural and ethic implications are perceived, understood and managed by the representatives of religious attractions as part of religious tourist offer. Moreover, religious tourism, including here pilgrimages with their multiple
valences and complex interactions may represent a starting point for the sustainable development of religious tourist destinations.

1. Concept delimitations of sustainable development and its implications on tourism

Starting with 80’s, researchers, practitioners and governmental bodies proposed at least 500 definitions of sustainable development (Carroll, 2003; Dale, 2001). Known as a “panacea” which could save the planet and humanity, maintaining an optimum economic increase at the same time, sustainable development became a concept sometimes contested and unclear due to its improper conceptualization and lack of a generally accepted definition. The most quoted definition is found in the Brundtland Report and refers to “the satisfaction of the needs of present generation without comprising the needs of the future generation to meet their own needs”. However, this definition witnessed a number of controversies within disciplines or economic sectors. Meanwhile, a number of researchers in the field of tourism (Lindberg, 1996; Stewart et al. 1994; Weaver, 1991) tried to build and apply concepts, models or to monitor sustainable tourism development systems. Unfortunately, these efforts were hindered by the lack of an agreement on a definition and on the theoretical and practical limitations of sustainability, in general (Mowforth and Munt, 1998).

However, in spite of criticism, the framework for sustainable development has been adopted and applied by many communities and enterprises as the adoption of the new paradigm based on its long-term optimization potential of economic viability, the protection of the natural and anthropic potential and the improvement of the quality of life within host-communities may be the key to solving the problems which tourism faces nowadays.

Sustainable tourism must determine the diversification of local economy, the optimisation of economic growth, the improvement of local and regional cooperation relations and the fair distribution of economic benefits to resident communities and to local industry of tourism (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005).

Globally, the rapid development of tourism sector brought about an increase of interest for the sustainable development of “community-based tourism”, the so-called “new tourism” (Hampton, 2005), even if it has been incorporated only to a little extent within public tourism policies (Bressers, 2004).

Some of the reasons supporting the idea of tourism as an ideal domain for the implementations of the principles of sustainable development are as follows:

- community resources such as: traditions, culture, facilities for spare time representing the core of tourism;
- tourism uses non-consumable resources which can be both anthropic or natural;
- tourism gives real opportunities to reduce poverty, to create new jobs, to support disadvantaged communities;
- tourism proved its capacity to revive culture and traditions and to encourage regional development;
- tourism may ensure an economic motivation to preserve the cultural and the natural heritage;
tourism proved its capacity to cultivate and to favour the understanding between peoples and the development of global consciousness.

In 2005, Tourism World Organisation along with United Nations Environment Programme released a guide-„Making tourism more sustainable”, which can be applied globally focusing on 12 principles with which sustainable tourism should comply: economic viability, local prosperity, employment quality, social equity, visitors’ satisfaction, local control, community welfare, cultural richness, physical integrity, biological diversity, resource efficient use and environment purity.

Religious tourism may represent a form of tourism ensuring the compliance with these requirements at a high level but by completing necessarily these coordinates with a fundamental dimension: spiritual dimension.

2. Commercial Valences of Religious Tourism

Presently, religious tourism is regarded by many tourist authorities and bodies as a way either for diversification or saving some problem-facing economies. Jackowski and Smith (1992) support the idea that religious tourism might become an important source of income and employment in Poland should infrastructure problems be solved. One of the good practice examples would be Spain where the promotion of tourism to El Rocio temple brought about a significant increase of local employment and incomes (Crain, 1996).

Economy and Religion were two forces shaping the world’s history. However, the economic issues of religious journeys were the least studied aspects of tourism - pilgrimage relation as the economic approaches of religious tourism focused on the singular or the comparative analysis of religious settlements.

Religious pilgrimages have a real history as economic generators for the visited areas as services developed to meet the needs involved by these journeys. This is also valid nowadays where numerous destinations, religious sites are the main tourist attraction supporting sometimes the whole economy. Such examples would be places such as Santiago de Compostela, Medjugorje, Lourdes or Makkah. In many communities or countries, tourism is seen as a solution for economy revival, all the more that religious tourism forecasts demonstrate it will increase in the coming future (Jackowski, 2000; San Filippo, 2001).

A number of economic realities determined religious settlements to obtain funds by means of trade, entry tax levy, provision of catering, guide or accommodation services.

Religious tourists become more and more sophisticated in their requests for journeys and are willing to pay more and more to have the desired experiences and to enjoy modern facilities. Almost all communities want tourism development as a „boom economic”; communities around sacred settlements need as much jobs, incomes and public services as the remaining communities and want to benefit from tourism industry. Moreover, religious organizations and their related sacred places cannot act separately from the rest of the world; communities need the money generated by religious tourism while religious organizations need community’s support.
Concerning commercial issues mainly represented by the sale of some religious objects and souvenirs, many churches and religious sites resort to this practice as the souvenir stores adjacent to many religious objectives have a significant economic value. Byawater (1994) and Fleischer (2000) argue that the sales of religious souvenirs reach hundreds of millions of dollars every year. Things are similar in Asia as Gupta (1999) underlines the fact that almost every place of pilgrimage in India has local handicrafts where tourists seek special objects made by hand. These examples support the hypothesis proposed by Fleischer who argues that economic impact related to religious tourism is higher than in other market segments as pilgrims and other religious travellers are eager purchasers of religious souvenirs (Fleischer, 2000). As the economy of religious tourism is so profitable, many religious groups are willing to accept ignorant tourist groups visiting or disturbing their religious centres.

As far as food services are concerned, there are restaurants and café bars in many religious settlements, the latter being quite “abundant” in the case of the Valamo Orthodox Monastery in Finland. In the city of Lourdes there are more than 100 restaurants (http://www.lourdes-infotourisme.com/uk/accomodation/restaurants/default.asp). Just like any other tourist, pilgrims have to spend the night somewhere. Accommodation facilities range between tents, small houses for guests, houses for pilgrims up to luxury hotels. Pilgrims of Mecca may rent tents for their accommodation, yet many of them who have a certain social status and financial means choose to accommodate in luxury hotels providing them with golf or spa services. Afta Tours Travel Agency, specialized in organizing luxury pilgrimages for Muslims, provide with a „Super Deluxe” tourist offer of 17 days during the hajj for the price of 5.950 Euros including also accommodation in luxury hotels and private tents near the Holy Mosque. Figures speak for themselves in these cases: every year, almost 2 millions of pilgrims go to Makkah during the 6 days of hajj. This pilgrimage values about 1.5 billion dollars of which 40% are acquired from renting rooms to pilgrims which represents an important input of financial resources for the local economy but also for the economy of Saudi Arabia.

The demand for services both from tourists and pilgrims bring about the change of cultural and urban landscape of pilgrimage centres. A clear example is Knock, a place in Ireland which presently has almost 800 inhabitants and where in 1879 local people reported an apparition of the Virgin Mary. A basilica having a capacity of 10.000 people was built in 1975 and an international airport which, is true, has been contested and criticized by many people was built in 1985, but who has brought many economic advantages for the region.

More than the change of landscape and space architecture, these religious pilgrimages helped to the development of places from the economic and demographic point of view. This is the case of the Lourdes who turned from a place with 4.000 inhabitants into a small city with 18.000 inhabitants. This happened in an area where economic indicators for neighbouring areas in the region of the Pyrénées were in a constant decline. The same path was taken by places such as Loreto and Fatima in Portugal or Medjugorje in Bosnia and Herzegovina and such examples could continue.

In Romania, a clear example in the spirit of combining religious, cultural and economic aspects of a religious settlement could be “Sâmbăta Academy – Spirituality, Culture, Arts and Science” from the Brâncoveanu Monastery in Sâmbăta de Sus. It comprises a building with about 70 rooms, respectively 130 places and a 150-seat amphitheatre with a seat box
and a room for simultaneous translations equipped with ultramodern electronic instruments, computers, public address system and video projector.

However, it should be also stated that excessive commercialization in some cases of tourism may have a negative socio-cultural impact on holy places. Therefore, there must be a balance so that the economic and the commercial part of a religious place should not overshadow its spiritual mission and should not affect the environment and the community where religious tourist supply and demand meet.

3. Religious tourism and sustainable development

Many religious tourist destinations have adopted or are about to adopt some plans and strategies for the sustainable development of religious heritage. Tourism offices established operational units with the mission to coordinate better the partners involved in religious tourism, especially in commercial sector. Their strategies comprise advanced marketing techniques relating to image, branding, promotion or merchandising. Religious tourist destinations also consolidate their internal and external partnerships, therefore:

(a) Internally, by joining together the actors involved in tourism industry the objective of which is to increase notoriety and enhance religious tourism;
(b) Externally, by setting up a network for a more efficient promotion of religious destinations or as a communication portal for experience exchange and good practice in this field.

The most remarkable contribution of religious heritage to local development resides in its capacity to attract tourists and resulting positive effects on incomes and employment. Due to its dimensions and the various forms in which it could be found, religious tourism brings about a number of economic and social opportunities for the regions where it operates and from which local communities should mainly benefit. Two important challenges should be overcome for this:

(1) The first refers to the conciliation of commercial needs of tourist industry with spiritual and religious needs of pilgrims and believers complying at the same time with the physical integrity and religious significance of religious settlements;
(2) The other refers to the right management of attracted resources and finding new resources ensuring the sustainability of the religious settlement or the religious objective as well as the welfare of hosting community.

Marketing and management organisms within the destination involved in religious tourism should adopt a number of strategies to protect and manage most efficiently religious heritage according to its potential and resources.

These efforts should also comprise ethical principles allowing as many people as possible to take part in religious pilgrimages and manifestations, an example in this respect being the Global Code of Ethics in Tourism (GCET). The partnerships between tourism industry and its closely connected sectors as well as agriculture and handicraft sector are indispensable, taking into account the need to create objects and experiences as genuine as possible.
To conclude, religious tourism pays and promotes respect for local confessions and traditions as well as environmental care; it offers and promotes high morality standards. It is a different approach of society and life, a type of journey encouraging dialogue between religions, communities of believers, churches, various nations and civilizations. Religious tourism may bring peace and build an understanding bridge in the world.

Preservation and protection of religious settlements fell within the attention of the people in charge with the sites who try to preserve them unaltered shaping, at the same time, the interactions with visitors. Consequently, in places where prayer or meditation is affected by agglomeration, noise, improper behaviour and visitors’ lack of respect during religious services and rites, they should be allowed to enter only at certain hours.

Another method would be making for the tourist use other access ways and routes than in the case of believers, thus reducing human impact to minimum and improving the control on sensitive areas. The use of information signs and boards may help at having a proper behaviour and an efficient management of the flows if visitors.

Closely related to the protection and management of religious sites and management of the flows of tourists, we can also speak about the principles of religious tourism sustainable development, taking into account the specific considerations of religious destinations.

These considerations refer to 4 distinct aspects according to the representatives of the department for Tourism Sustainable Development within UNWTO (Bumbaru, 2007):

1. Places for prayer (churches, temples, mosques, synagogues etc.) and pilgrims’ routes attract both believers and non-believers;
2. There’s a high visitors’ influence at precise time moments;
3. The relation between the authenticity of religious and cultural heritage and visitors’ satisfaction;
4. Nature of marketing and promotion activities.

4. Research objectives and methodology

The first objective of this study was to identify the contributions and the effects caused by an increased number of visitors as an integrant part of religious tourism on Romanian places deemed as sacred or holy and on the community where it develops from the point of view of the people responsible with religious attractions. The second objective, closely connected to the first one, was to determine the role of commercial issues in the activity of religious settlements.

The hypothesis from which this study started assumes the existence of some significant differences in the perception of the religious attraction representatives referring to the role and the contributions of commercial aspects and religious tourism according to the typology of religious settlements and, respectively, the acceptance of religious tourism and its commercial side as a mean for sustainable development by the religious settlements managers.

Concerning the surveyed population and considering the fact that Romania is the only Latin country in East-Central Europe and the only Latin country whose main religion is Orthodox
Christian – 86.7% of population declared to be Orthodox at the Census of 2002 (http://recensament.referinte.transindex.ro/?pg=8), we considered an opportunity and a challenge at the same time to study the elements relating to religious tourism only for Orthodox spirituality, religion considered to be conservative and traditionalist in relation to other denominations.

The next step consisted of establishing the elements of religious tourism supply which should be examined. After discussions with the representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church, especially the spokesman of the Metropolitan Community Church of Cluj, Alba, Crişana and Maramureş and the providers of religious tourist supply we came to the conclusion that the study should take into consideration only monasteries as religious tourist destinations or attractions as for Romanian Orthodox believers they represent almost exclusively the pilgrimage places or the places to which they make a journey, as other sites or types of objectives (natural attractions, historical vestiges, miracle working places etc.) as they do not have a significant religious importance for Romanian spirituality.

Moreover, in any place which was considered “holy” at a certain moment, there was a monastery, a church or a hermitage was built so that, for the time being, we do not think that we can talk about other tourist destinations with religious significance on the Romanian market except for monasteries and churches. Churches were excluded from survey universe taking into account that they have no permanent inhabitants.

Therefore, the population investigated was made up of the complex of Orthodox monasteries on the whole Romanian territory and the sampling unit was represented by the monastic settlement through the abbot as the persons in charge with it and its representative.

For the identification of a structured sampling frame comprising the list with all the monasteries, monastery type, county of origin and probably some contact details, we consulted the Directory of Orthodox Monasteries in Romania, examining, at the same time, monastery guidebooks and tourist guidebooks of Romania. This was due to the fact that we aimed at the identification of monastic complexes which should meet a certain tourist function for the time being.

Taking into account the sampling frame specified above, we excluded the monasteries in large cities to be able to identify with precision the locations where demand is exclusively or mainly oriented to religious tourist attraction. Moreover, we took into consideration the lack of inhabitants within the monasteries and we granted a special attention to monasteries specified in tourist guidebooks, those which by their nature meet to a larger extent the purpose of these researches relating to identifying the features of religious tourist supply.

Taking into account all these restrictions, the available data and study requirements we established a size of sampling frame of 250 units, and “face to face” punctual survey was our data gathering method at the place of the monastic settlement. To establish the information gathering instrument we opted for a questionnaire. The questionnaire we used had open questions, unique and multiple-choice questions, 5 points Likert scale and multiple asymmetric scales.

The next step consisted of establishing the size of a sample in case of a random poll, with a 95% level of result guarantee, a 5% error and a maximum dispersion of studied features. As the size of the sample obtained was great as compared to investigated population, the
sampling fraction exceeding the 14.3% threshold and thus facing an exhaustive random poll, we adjusted sample size according to Yves Fourmi’s formula and obtained a new value of the sample of 151 units \((n=1,962*0.5 (1-0.5)/0.052\rightarrow n=385; n^*=385*250/385+250\rightarrow n^*=151)\).

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 Metropolitan 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 comprised almost an equal number of nuns and monks monasteries. Concerning the Metropolitan Community Church to which the monastery belongs, 57.55% of monastic settlements belong to the Metropolitan Community Church of Cluj, Alba, Crișana and Maramureș. The study covers 24 counties and comprises both monasteries with a reduced number of members (less than 5 inhabitants -34.71%), as well as large monasteries (more than 25 inhabitants -16.53%). The methodological limits of this research are the fact that the Metropolitan Community Church of Cluj, Alba, Crișana and Maramureș is overrepresented. Still, since no significant differences were found within abbots’ answers in function of the Metropolitan Church, we can extrapolate our results at a national level.

5. Research Results

In the first stage, using the statistical programme SPSS, version no.16, we established accordingly to abbots’ perceptions the evolution of the number of visitors within the monastery in the light of increase, decrease and maintenance of this number (Table no. 1). In case of more than 70% of the examined monasteries, it seems that the number of visitors increases every year proving once more the spreading phenomenon of religious journeys in Romania.

Table no. 1: Estimation of visitors’ number evolution within the monastery as seen by monastery representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of visitors</th>
<th>Abbots’ opinion</th>
<th>Perception factor</th>
<th>influencing factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increases every year</td>
<td>72.40%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monastery size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remained the same every year</td>
<td>21.10%</td>
<td>Z=-1.986 ((p=0.047&lt;0.05))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has decreased lately</td>
<td>6.50%</td>
<td>Rho=0.180 ((p=0.047&lt;0.05))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(Z=\) Nonparametric Mann-Whitney test, Rho= Spearman’s correlation Coefficient

The last set of questions aimed at outlining the role that the number of visitors and their needs had on the life of monastery from the point of view of its development in the light of infrastructure, services and commercial aspect (Table no. 2). Consequences have been assessed by means of a 4-point symmetric scale starting from their total lack (-2=“at all”) and up to exercising a very high influence (+2=very much”) to which the alternative “it’s not the case” has been added. We introduced this alternative for religious settlements where the issue of this type of development has not been posed yet and we addressed the 4-stage
scale to the monasteries having witnessed a certain development and we aimed at assessing
the extent to which visitors and their needs contributed to this development.

For the correct identification of influence degree, each variable has been previously filtered
and thus we eliminated the answers concerning religious settlements where development
problem regarding the infrastructure, services and commercial activities has not been posed
yet. As a result of analyses, it resulted that visitors’ number and needs brought about for
more than half of monasteries the development of monastic settlement in the light of
constructions or infrastructure and the development of commercial sides to a great or very
great extent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increase of the number of visitors brought about</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Much and Very much</th>
<th>It’s not the case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of monastic settlement by means of new constructions</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>57.10%</td>
<td>14.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of commercial side (emergence of a souvenir store, sale of objects made within the monastery)</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>55.10%</td>
<td>26.83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences have been identified by means of Pearson’s correlation coefficient
according to monastery type in relation to the development of the religious settlement as far
as infrastructure is concerned ($C=0.289; p=0.023<0.05$) and the development of its
commercial side ($C=0.279; p=0.05=0.05$) as in both cases these developments being more
obvious in the case of monasteries of abbots. By means of ANOVA parametric test ($F$)
significant differences have been identified between the development of monastery’s
commercial side and its size ($F=3.312; p=0.008<0.01$).

In the following pages, we identified the opinion of the people responsible with religious
settlements concerning monastery’s commercial side and we tried a unique orientation of
answers to 3 coordinates: to a development of commercial side, its promotion or
consideration as a means of survival. Most abbots consider this commercial side to be just
a supplementation of monastery’s financial resources obtained by donations (33.63%) or as
a means of survival (25.66%), while the development and the diversification of
commercial side represents a wish for 31.85% of abbots. Only 8.85% of respondents think
that commercial activity of monastic complex should be promoted more.

Options concerning monastery commercial side vary greatly according to the dimension of
monastic settlement while commercial side diversification and development is more
specific to monasteries with a reduced number of members ($C=0.48; p=0.024<0.05$).

The following questions aimed at identifying the benefits and the disadvantages caused by
a large number of visitors to monasteries (Table no. 3). Starting hypotheses were that the
main advantage brought about by a great number of visitors is material, made by donations,
sale of religious objects etc., and as for disadvantages, the main abbots’ dissatisfiction
would be disturbance of ordinary schedule of those living in the monastery. Both questions
were open questions and encoding in the first case was rather easy by grouping benefits
Cluster Analyze into 6 great categories: “spiritual”, “material”, “spiritual and material”, “notoriety”, “happiness” and “none”.

Disadvantages have also been grouped into 6 categories: “disturbance of monastery’s peaceful life”, “disturbance of monastery’s life and schedule” (here we mainly grouped the undesired effects on monastic religious life, prayer times of monastic inhabitants, etc.), “disorder”, “visitors’ improper conduct / clothing”, “other” and “none”.

Table no. 3: Consequences of a high number of visitors on monastery according to abbots’ opinion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Disturbance of monastery specific silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.46%</td>
<td>30.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Disturbance of monastery life and schedule and of its members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.12%</td>
<td>18.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual and material</td>
<td>Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.02%</td>
<td>7.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notoriety</td>
<td>Improper conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.23%</td>
<td>2.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.66%</td>
<td>5.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.51%</td>
<td>33.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perception influencing factor: Monastery type

\(C=0.312\) \(p=0.032<0.05\)

Perception influencing factor: County to which monastery belongs

\(C=0.736\) \(p=0.050=0.05\)

The analyses carried out indicated the fact that as for advantages, our hypothesis has been confirmed, the greatest advantages brought about by an increased number of visitors are material, but as for disadvantages are concerned, the surprise was that 33.08% of respondents thought that there’s no disadvantage related to a high number of people within the monastery. This consolidates our hypothesis relating to the fact that religious tourism may contribute to religious settlement sustainable development in Romania.

Nevertheless, the main disadvantage was “disturbance of monastery’s peaceful life” (30.14%), followed by „disturbance of monastery’s life and of its members” (18.38%).

The fact that almost a third of respondents did not think that there’s a disadvantage caused by an increased number of visitors can be due to the fact that saturation point has not been reached in many religious settlements while in others, the number of visitors is probably still considered to be little.

The following stage aimed at establishing the implications which religious tourism might have on monastery, community and religious tourist demand (Table no. 4). For this, we studied abbots’ degree of agreement with the possible benefits brought about religious tourism by means of a 5 point Likert scale starting from “total disagreement” (-2) and up to “total agreement” (+2).
Table no. 4: Evaluation of the support felt by monastery and community as a result of religious tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious tourism:</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Modal</th>
<th>Total agreement and agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious tourism serves monastery’s spiritual mission</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps at monasteries’ development and maintenance</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps community by access infrastructure creation / improvement and local development</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>71.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings about benefits for the communities where it operates</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through it, monastery’s, travellers’ and community needs can be met simultaneously</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It can help the monastery economically through donations, sponsorships</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious tourism represents a happy combination between a monastery’s spiritual and the economic side</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the factors influencing monastery representatives’ opinions concerning the role that religious tourism might have, we examined the factors concerning monastery’s features. For this we used ANOVA test for average comparison, specific to numeric variables in case of monastery’s size, Pearson’s correlation coefficient for “county” and “Metropolitan Community Church” and Mann-Whitney non-parametric test for monastery type.

There are no significant differences between the answers received according to monastery type and Metropolitan Community Church, but there were a number of differences related to monastery size and county (Table no. 5). As one can see, county may have a strong influence on the monastery representatives’ vision concerning the extent to which religious tourism may contribute to the development of religious settlements, the accomplishment of its spiritual mission and it can help it economically.
### Table no. 5: Influence of monastery and county size on the opinion of monastery’s representatives on the role of religious tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monastery Size</th>
<th>County Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious tourism serves monastery’s spiritual mission</strong></td>
<td>F=3.421, p=0.006 &lt; 0.01, C=0.651, p=0.631 &gt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious tourism helps at monasteries’ development and maintenance</strong></td>
<td>F=3.120, p=0.011 &lt; 0.05, C=0.721, p=0.003 &lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious tourism brings about benefits for the communities where it operates</strong></td>
<td>F=0.727, p=0.605 &gt; 0.05, C=0.693, p=0.061 &gt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Through Religious tourism, monastery’s, travellers’ and community needs can be met simultaneously</strong></td>
<td>F=2.196, p=0.059 &gt; 0.05, C=0.678, p=0.177 &gt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious tourism helps the monastery economically through donations, sponsorships.</strong></td>
<td>F=3.344, p=0.065 &gt; 0.05, C=0.714, p=0.000 &lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious tourism represents a happy combination between a monastery’s spiritual and the economic side</strong></td>
<td>F=1.156, p=0.335 &gt; 0.05, C=0.709, p=0.014 &lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(C = Pearson’s correlation coefficient, F = ANOVA non-parametric test)*

### Final Conclusions

In Romania, the perceptions of monastery’s representatives on the evolution of visitors’ number certify the trends and forecasts recorded on international market outlining its increase from one year to another for the biggest majority of religious settlements. According to the results of this study, this number of settlements had or has, among others, the following consequences on religious settlement:

1. Accomplishment of monastery’s spiritual mission;
2. Monastic settlement development by means of new constructions;
3. Commercial side development;
4. Obtain, first of all, some material benefits (economic); but also
5. Disturbance of monastery’s life, monastery members and schedule.

All these aspects prove the fact that religious tourism through its commercial side can provide, with certain restrictions, the sustainable development of the Romanian religious sits and their host communities.

Moreover, the commercial side is regarded by most representatives of religious settlements as a means of survival or as a supplementation of the resources obtained through donations. Therefore, there’s no question of over commercialization of religious sites and the emergence of some negative effects on environment, on the religious site itself or on the satisfaction of religious tourists coming here.
Therefore, accordingly to our results, we can assume that generally, in Romania, this commercial activity related to monastic complexes complies with the principles of sustainable development, contributing to the welfare of host-community.

Evaluation of the extent to which the increased number of visitors brings about a number of benefits to religious settlements confirmed once more the fact that economic aid, by means of donations and sponsorships represent the main gain caused by these visitors followed by supporting monastery’s spiritual mission. To an important extent, an increased number of visitors may bring about benefits for the host community and help to the improvement of its image.

There are significant correlations between the perceptions of the representatives of monastic complexes concerning the benefits entailed by a possible high tourist demand, less in the case of economic benefit and respectively spiritual, the latter being influenced by the county and Metropolitan Community Church the monastery belongs to.

The opinions of monastery’ representatives concerning religious tourism in Romania outlined that in most cases it helps to its development, it brings about benefits to communities where it operates, allows the satisfaction of needs of all those involved (visitors, monastery and community) and it can be considered a happy combination between monastery’s economic and spiritual side.

Therefore, by compliance with place religious significance, compliance with some norms of conduct, avoidance of over commercialization and excessive exposure of religious supply elements, care for environment and host community, there can be reached a balance point between the needs and the expectations of all the parties involved in religious tourism as religious tourism supply is ready and willing to become an integrant part of sustainable development as long as it serves to the accomplishment of its spiritual mission.

References


Implications of Commercial Activity within Monastic Settlements as a Way to Maintain the Sustainable Development of Religious Tourism in Romania


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