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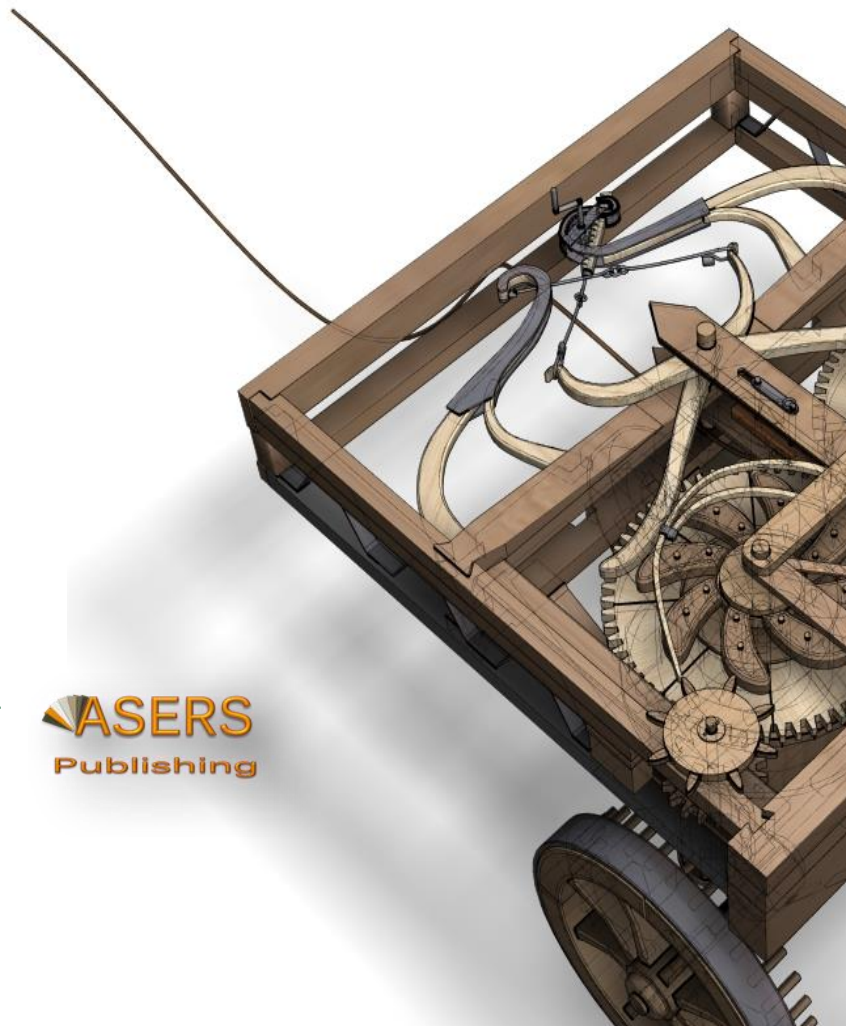
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Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism is an interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that should contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences.

Journal will publish original research and seeks to cover a wide range of topics regarding environmental management and engineering, environmental management and health, environmental chemistry, environmental protection technologies (water, air, soil), pollution reduction at source and waste minimization, energy and environment, modeling, simulation and optimization for environmental protection; environmental biotechnology, environmental education and sustainable development, environmental strategies and policies, etc. This topic may include the fields indicated above, but are not limited to these.

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The Dynamics of Religious Tourism. Case Study: Romania

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Abstract:

In recent years, world tourism has diversified its forms of manifestation on an international level, trying to capitalize on the most valuable cultural and religious objectives of a country's cultural and religious heritage.

I chose such a theme because we are witnessing a revival of this form of tourism. It is thousands and thousands of years old, and now it is gaining momentum with the help of another vision of religious and pilgrimage tourism. Its new dimensions make it an attractive field for tourism agencies, national and local authorities, tour operators, transport companies, universities, public administrations, those dealing with general and specific infrastructure, as well as others.

In Romania, with the collapse of the communist system, the presence of religious topics in the media discourse increased significantly. Particular attention is paid to the phenomenon of pilgrimage, and often this information ends up being the most important news of the day, on many communication channels. Pilgrimages are considered to be important religious events, heavily mediatized and very popular among the faithful, but very little researched. The present work aims to look towards these unexplored areas and study the phenomenon of pilgrimage, to analyze the economic dynamics of the religious phenomenon. Some of these fields are intensively researched abroad, where there is a significant specialized literature, while in Romania, these fields are less investigated.

There are many studies in the field, at the international level, but at the national level, the phenomenon is less debated. This is the reason why the proposed case study and the examples used in the paper investigate the Romanian religious realities.

In this article we aim to create both an image of religious tourism today and its dynamics in the near future (the evolution of the number of tourists and the economic side of this phenomenon).

Keywords: religions; religious tourism; evolution; pilgrimage; Romania.

JEL Classification: Z31; Z32; C61; R11; Z12.

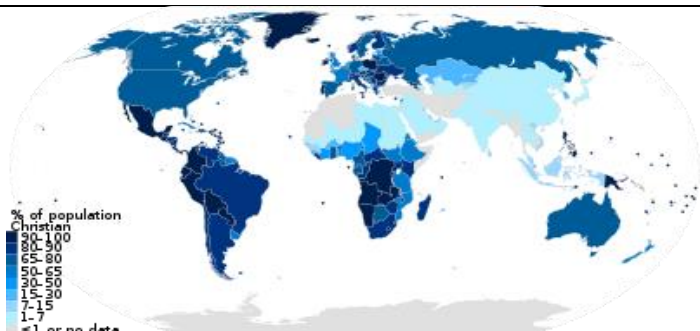
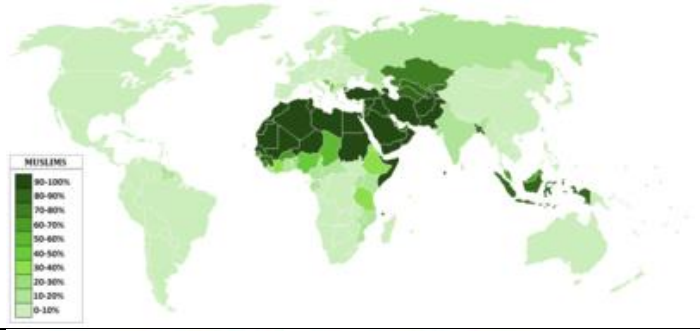


Introduction

Tourism is an activity as important as that carried out in other key sectors of the world economy (industry, agriculture, trade). The tourism phenomenon is extremely difficult to define because, like any human activity, it falls under the incidence of interdisciplinary study, training statisticians, economists, geographers, psychologists and sociologists alike.

In fact, tourism began with people's pilgrimages to holy places.

According to the annual report published by the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity (from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), in 2021, the number of Christians worldwide is 2,432,007,000, out of an estimated total of 7,875,465,000 inhabitants of the planet (so just over 31% of the world's population). In a top 3 religion, Christians are followed by Muslims (1,926,115,000) and Hindus (1,073,619,000). Far from being a marginal phenomenon, religion dominates copiously and is on an upward trend – with 6,996,150,000 people declaring their affiliation to a religion (almost 90%). At the opposite pole, a number of 879,315,000 people (around 11%) declare themselves non-religious, of which 147,609,000 are atheists (under 2%), and the largest share is held by agnostics 731,705,000 (Table 1).

Table 1. World Religions

The most widespread religions	Global spread	Believers from the world population (%)
Christianity		31.11
Islam		24.90
Hinduism		15.16
Budism		6.62
Total		77.79

Source: <https://statisticsanddata.org/data/most-popular-religions-in-the-world-1950-2022/>

The growth rate of the number of religious people (1.29%) among the global population, compared to the year 2000, exceeds almost three times the growth rate of the non-religious (0.47%) – agnostics and atheists. In the last ten years, the religion with the highest growth rate was Islam (1.92%), followed by Sikhism (1.71%) and Hinduism (1.28%). Christianity occupies the fourth position, with an increase of 1.18%. (<https://www.gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/>)

If we add the other religions, less known, we notice that approximately 80% of the world's population is affiliated to a religion. If a small percentage of them go on pilgrimage or religious trips, we notice that religious tourism has a special importance in general tourism. Therefore, on a global level, religious tourism attracts a very large number of visitors. In fact, tourism started just like that, through people's pilgrimages to holy places.

Between religion and tourism, respectively between culture and tourism, there are countless interactions and combinations based on the relationship between the cultural objective/sacred place and the tourist's motivation depending on which several aspects can be analysed.

Religious tourism represents a special form of tourism characterized by the desire to know individuals, by permanent searches, by the desire to be informed, educated, or found. Through religious tourism, tourists travel to holy places, tombs, churches, monasteries, temples or mosques in the hope of self-discovery, the search for peace of mind, reconciliation with oneself and reality. The turmoil, the thoughts, the turmoil of the soul diminish to the point of disappearance in those holy places where the tourist feels closer to divinity, where the divine inspiration protects and motivates him for a while in the sense of resistance or even the defeat of real or apparent obstacles on his way to perfection, professional and moral perfection. The search for divinity through pilgrimages organized in groups or individual journeys is specific to a different market segment, which cannot be included in any other classification according to age, sex, income, social category, education, because the tourist motivation is strictly spiritual and personal.

Therefore, world tourism has diversified its forms of manifestation on an international level, trying to capitalize on the most valuable cultural and religious objectives of a country's cultural and religious heritage. Domestic and international organizations welcome those interested and develop successful models for them to follow. The most well-known and unique in the field is the World Religious Tourism Association founded in 2006 in the USA.

1. Literature Review

The desire to travel and to know new things has been known since antiquity, even if at the beginning these desires had as their main purpose the war, the conquest of new territories or commercial exchange.

Perhaps the first people who wanted to travel a lot and made travel easier were the ancient Greeks. They concluded contracts for mutual visits, befriended people of the same occupation, thus gaining the safety of the trip. This visiting contract could be inherited from father to son.

Large masses of people were attracted to visit the holy places, the healing baths, the places where the festive games were held. Particularly important was the circulation to curative baths in Rome, the city having 854 popular baths and 14 luxury baths. The first tourist guide appears in 1130, written by Aimeri Picaud, a French monk.

Over time, the motivations for travel begin to diversify, the tourism activity taking shape more and more, determined by religious actions, the use of curative baths, journeys of journeymen and students to university centers, trips to new worlds, etc. In parallel with the increase in passenger traffic, the hotel industry, communications, transport, activities aimed at tourism have also developed.

The first mentions of concerns about traveling appear in antiquity in the works of the geographer Strabo. The descriptions left by Marco Polo on occasion of his Asian journey (13th century), those of Arthur Young (18th century) or, closer to us, of Henri Monfreid marked future concerns regarding the practice of travel.

Tourism becomes a complex mass phenomenon at the end of the 19th century, having a rapid development.

As stated by Dallen Timothy, Religious tourism is a form of tourism that has existed for centuries and still retains some features, regarding the actual pilgrimage, but which has evolved enormously. Today, religious tourism implies, on the part of tourists, a high level of training and a high degree of culture that allows the appreciation of cultural-religious objectives from the point of view of architecture, construction, value, spiritual meanings and the content of art objects. Important pilgrimages from different countries (obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca) or those related to specific events and manifestations are still preserved. Religious tourism is a complex phenomenon that is in constant transformation and diversification, but preserving the basic element that consecrated it: religion. (Dallen Timothy, 2020)

Religious tourism is an important component of tourism and that is why there are many studies on this topic. Most refer to places specific to some areas or a religion. Two major research trends have occurred in recent decades, in the field of religious tourism. One of them refers to the significant growth dynamics of religious tourism in the contemporary world (Dejan Iliev, 2020), and the other one considers the potential impact that pandemics may have on these growth dynamics.

As Dallen J. Timothy (2020) also states: "Religious tourism, or pilgrimage, in fact is the underlying motive for some of the world's largest tourist gatherings, and many destinations rely almost entirely upon it for their economic wellbeing. The hajj pilgrimage undertaken by Muslims to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, every year is the second largest tourist gathering in the world with more than 2 million religious adherents gathering in one small space for

a short period of time. This event is exceeded only by the Hindu Khumb Mela, which involves many millions of people (some recent estimates suggest even 150 million) every few years in a handful of locations in India.”

The relationship between religion and tourism has been studied from different perspectives over time. Some authors emphasize the existence of a difference between cultural and pilgrimage tourism (Richard Butler and Wantanee Suntikul 2018), others think the extent of this type of tourism is important (Kevin Griffin and Razaq Raj 2017; Mauro Romanelli et. al, 2021). Some of them follow with interest the economic aspect created by this type of tourism (Mahanty Tushar 2022), and others do bibliometric studies on the publications on this subject (Durán-Sánchez, A. *et al.* 2018; Burcu Karasakaloğlu 2020; Suban Syed Ahamed 2022). Others focus on the places visited and their importance from a religious point of view (Collins-Kreiner, N. and Klot N. 2000; Capets, R. 2018; Roszak, P. 2022).

Opinions about the pilgrimage are divided. Thus, Noga Collins-Kreiner (2020) considers that “Pilgrimage was the first tourism mobility to come into existence thousands of years ago. In recent decades, its significance has decreased, as other tourism segments have gained prominence. Although modern tourism is regarded as a relatively new phenomenon, its origins are clearly rooted in the age-old practice of pilgrimage. Indeed, the development of tourism is difficult to understand without a thorough comprehension of the practice of pilgrimage in ancient times.” and concludes that “that pilgrimage will re-emerge when the many similar segments – particularly, spiritual tourism, heritage tourism, religious tourism, dark tourism and secular pilgrimage – are re-identified as pilgrimage: a mobility for the search for meaning that contains an element of transformation that is often deep and enduring (as they were viewed at the dawn of humanity and for thousands of years.”

There are many authors who have studied over time various developments in dynamics using mathematical or statistical tools (Chhorn, Theara. 2018; Jackson, E. A., Tamuke, E. 2019). Sometimes the results are very important and lead to solving existing problems (Haraldsson HV, Ólafsdóttir R. 2018).

It is also very important to maintain the places of pilgrimage, those with historical importance, to keep them in the tourist circuit.

In order to study both the dynamics of the number of tourists and the economic effects of this type of tourism, many and varied methods have been used over time, taking into account the behavior of tourists, special days of prayer, periods of pilgrimage in certain areas, consumption of certain foods. The analysis can be done with tools of economic dynamics and forecasting.

2. Development Trends of Religious Tourism

I chose such a theme because we are witnessing a rebirth of this form of tourism. It is thousands and thousands of years old, and now it is gaining momentum with the help of another vision on religious and pilgrimage tourism. Its new dimensions make it a field attractive for tourism agencies, national and local authorities, tour operators, transport companies, universities, public administrations, those dealing with general and specific infrastructure, as well as others.

Between tourism and culture, respectively between tourism and religion, there are countless interactions and combinations based on the relationship between the cultural objective/sacred place and the tourist's motivation depending on which several aspects can be analysed.

In recent years, world tourism has diversified its forms of manifestation on an international level, trying to capitalize on the most valuable cultural and religious objectives of a country's cultural and religious heritage. Domestic and international organizations welcome those interested and develop successful models for them to follow.

2.1 The Difference between Tourists and Pilgrims

The Pilgrimage tourism provides an opportunity to participate in worshipping and praying. The Pilgrimage can also be classified according to the number of participants, *i.e.* individual, family, group. If one considers the duration of the tour, one can identify long and short pilgrimages. Depending on the location of the shrine, there are domestic and foreign tours. It should be noted that both the religious tourism and the pilgrimage has several reasons. At the heart of the pilgrimage is the human being conventional attitude to religion, his conscious activity implies the desire to see the shrines that have significance precisely for him. The definition of tourism as a kind of activity is in no way inferior to the concept and essence of the pilgrimage. Relying on the scientific definition of the pilgrimage and religious tours, it can be said that it applies more to tourism than to human spiritual activity. It gives evidence to talk about the pilgrimage as a tour (Fakhruddinova *et al.* 2017).

Every year, religion manages to motivate millions of people to set off on a journey. Statistics show that, annually, approximately 240 million of people go on pilgrimage to the great centres of worship, located all over the

Globe. For several decades, the popularity of the religious phenomenon has increased the importance of pilgrimage and positively influenced the dynamics of international tourism.

On the website of a church in Canada that organizes pilgrimages, there is the following table which shows very well the difference between the culture-seeking tourist and the pilgrim.

Table 2. Tourist or Pilgrim?

The Tourist...	The Pilgrim...
There never was a pilgrim who did not come back to his village with one less prejudice and one more idea	Focuses preparation on understanding the context about to be entered, and by reflecting on how the trip will result in personal transformation as well as positive impacts for local people
Seeks historical "tourist sites" and interesting facts	Seeks to interpret historical sites to reveal present-day truths about him/herself and interaction with the world
Observes	Immerses
Travels, tours, and returns home	Sees the trip as a continuing journey that includes home
Interacts mainly with fellow tourists and designated locals	Interacts as much as possible with people in the communities being visited
Plays it as safe as possible	Is willing to take some risks and challenges to enter deeper into the local context
Seeks famous places and sites	Seeks places that reveal stories, often off the beaten track
Seeks comfort and familiarity	Recognizes hardship and discomfort are part of the learning and transformation process
Generally, avoids local people unless they are part of services needed to accommodate the tourist	Emphasizes the importance of encountering and engaging with local people
Returns home to show pictures of places visited	Returns home to tell the stories of the people and culture encountered on the journey, and stories of personal change
Uses own culture as a reference point for behaviour and interactions	Discovers as much as possible about the local culture and uses it as a reference point for behaviour and interactions
Returns home more or less the same person, with new geographical knowledge	Returns home a person changed by the reflections and interactions generated by the journey

Source: <https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/unsettling-goods-tourist-pilgrim.pdf>

Although, sometimes, they have common routes and find themselves in the same space, the pilgrims are easy to distinguish from the tourists. The latter are generally people fascinated by the landscape or the beauty of a painting, and their relationship with the sacred place visited is consumed by immortalizing the building on camera, rather than by participating in the activities of the visited place of worship. The difference between a pilgrim and a tourist would be, in short, that the pilgrim pursues, first of all, spiritual edification, being carried on the way by faith, while the tourist is limited to visiting the "religious objective", with the same interest in which also has it compared to other touristic objectives.

There is a map of the pilgrimage sites. The pilgrims' option is not channelled by any media campaign, as happens in the case of tourist activities. The selection of options depends on the inner sensitivity of the pilgrim, on the place where the soul and its searches are found. Religious pilgrimages went to Rome and Jerusalem for Christians, Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia for Muslims, and sanctuaries in India and Indochina for Southerners, Mount Fuji for the Japanese.

2.2 Religious Tourism in the World

Religious tourism is a significant part of the global travel industry and one of the most important forms of tourism in the world. People who visit the holy places do it either for the religious experience or out of curiosity. Even if today the pilgrimage is done more by means of transport than on foot, tourists are eager to visit a holy place at least once in their life. However, here are some estimates:

1. Around 300 million people travel annually for religious purposes.
2. The global religious tourism market was valued at approximately \$18.5 billion in 2018 and is expected to reach \$21.7 billion by 2026.
3. Religious tourists tend to stay longer and spend more than regular tourists, with an average spend of around \$2,500 per trip.
4. The majority of religious tourists are from Asia and the Pacific, followed by Europe and North America.

5. The most popular destinations for religious tourism include the Vatican City, Jerusalem, Mecca, and various pilgrimage sites in India.

These are just a few examples of the significance of religious tourism in the world, and the numbers may change over time as travel patterns and tourism trends evolve.

Therefore, at the global level, religious tourism attracts a very large number of visitors, and depending on their density, a top of the most frequented religious destinations can be made.

The most famous and most visited religious destinations are:

Table 3. The most visited religious destinations

Religious destination		No. visitors annually (million)
Senso-ji Temple, Tokyo, Japan	Senso-ji is the oldest temple in Tokyo. Known throughout world, it is the temple of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, who embodies the mercy of all Buddhas.	30
Kashi Vishwanath, Varanasi, India (River Ganges)	Kashi Vishwanath Temple is regarded as one of the most popular Hindu temples dedicated to Lord Shiva.	25
Western Wall, Jerusalem, Israel (Kotel)	It is a vestige of the ancient wall that surrounded the courtyard of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem after the destruction of the fact that it became the main sacred place of Judaism. It is a place of prayer and the main place of pilgrimage for Jews.	13-15
Al-Haram Mosque, Mecca, Saudi Arabia	The Masjid al-Harām, also called the Sacred Mosque, and the Grand Mosque or Great Mosque of Mecca, is the largest mosque in the world and surrounds Islam's holiest place.	13
Notre Dame, Paris, France	The Notre Dame Cathedral Paris, a masterpiece of faith, art and history, is the cathedral of the Catholic archdiocese of Paris. It is one of the best-known symbols of the French capital, and the most-visited monument in France.	13
Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico City	The Basilica of Guadalupe is the most visited Marian sanctuary in the world and even exceeds the number of pilgrims to Vatican City.	12,5
Golden Temple, Amritsar, India	Many Sikhs make a pilgrimage to the Golden Temple. They do this for to pay their respect to the Guru Granth Sahib, who gives Sikhs rules on morals, ethics and for living a good life.	7
St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City, Italy	This basilica lies over the tomb of St. Peter. Contained within St. Peter's Basilica is one of the world's most famous collections of artworks ever assembled, reflecting the immensity, beauty, vastness, majesty, glory and awesomeness of God. This Basilica is the spiritual capital for over a billion Roman Catholics around the world.	4,2
Karnak Temple complex, Egypt	It is a city of temples built over 2,000 years and dedicated to the Theban triad of Amun, Mut, and Khonsu. It is considered to be the largest religious building or site in the world.	0.5
Mount Athos	An Orthodox spiritual centre since 1054, Mount Athos has enjoyed an autonomous statute since Byzantine times. The 'Holy Mountain' is forbidden to women and children.	0.3

Source: Data collected by the author

These numbers may vary. Around important holidays, the number of visitors increases considerably, but there are also days when the number is lower.

Nowadays, the pilgrimage to the most favored religious structure has become much easier. Whether near or far, there is a special section of religious tourism itself, which includes tour packages including one or more places of pilgrimage for followers.

2.3 The Role of Pilgrimage in Different Religious Traditions

Pilgrimage is a component of religious anthropology, and a phenomenon that is part of the scope of study and research of several scientific fields. It has been researched directly or indirectly by both historians, geographers, economists, folklorists, philosophers, sociologists, ethnologists and theologians.

Pilgrimage is an open gateway to a rare and different access path to the divine that allows encounter with supernatural forces or sacred realities. It is a custom of human communities, a journey of believers to a place consecrated by a divine manifestation, or by the activity of a religious master.

Gradually, however, the pilgrimage becomes a phenomenon that exceeds the canon church and is enriched with new elements such as: the search for relics, miracles, miraculous healings.

The main reasons for which these trips were undertaken are two: to visit these places and to pray where the presence of a divinity materialized.

Even if each individual religion presents important differences regarding the time, method and meaning of the pilgrimage, the basic idea is common and highlights the need to visit places considered to be "inhabited" by divinity, in various forms, sacred objects of some founders of religions, relics of saints and martyrs or even some places related to particular events.

Depending on the goal pursued by the pilgrims, Alan Morinis (1992) proposes a typology of the reasons why pilgrims go on a journey: some pilgrims set out for devotional purposes, to worship a deity, a sacred space or a symbol; other pilgrims leave following their own agenda, wanting to recover, to achieve the fulfillment of certain concrete, worldly things. There are pilgrimages undertaken for normative purposes, these being associated with rites of passage and calendar changes. In other cases, pilgrimages may be imposed by religious or secular authority in order to atone for a penance. Pilgrims sometimes do not have a specific purpose when they set out on their journey but undertake the route in the hope of a revelation or the desired answer.

The regulations and norms of conduct and often clothing required or imposed on those who go to places of pilgrimage have the role of maintaining, in particular, the moral and religious character of this concerns. The pilgrim, regardless of religion or cult, is asked to be focused and involved in restoring the ties with the divinity, lost as a result of sin, and is recommended to make full use of each sacrifice made following this gesture with the aim of obtaining salvation.

2.3.1. Pilgrimage in the Islamic Religion. The Uniqueness of the Hajj

Pilgrimage is the fifth pillar of Islam. Prayer is performed (or not) five times a day, almsgiving is given, and Ramadan is observed once a year. The pilgrimage, however, is done only once in a lifetime, and that only if possible (Hitti, P. 2008). The main pilgrimage, hajj, differs from the Christian concept of pilgrimage. For most Christians, the journey is as important or even more important than arriving at the holy places, while for Muslims, it is not so much how a pilgrim gets to Mecca that matters, but what he does there - especially at Kaaba, "the house of God" - and then in the environs of Mecca for several days. A series of elaborate rituals are prescribed. Most seem to pre-date Islam and have been taken over by Muhammad.

If in other religions, pilgrimages are voluntary, and pilgrims can choose the time of the pilgrimage as well as the sacred places to visit, the hajj, according to the Qur'an is obligatory for all physically and financially able Muslims and must be performed in one location and at a certain time.

Hajj is an obligation that can only be performed in Mecca.

Unlike Benares or Jerusalem, Mecca is not at the top of a system of sacred sites, where multiple pilgrimages offer different ascending degrees of grace. The Hajj eclipses all other pious journeys, for for Muslims it is simply their pilgrimage.

The expenses involved in the pilgrimage are high, even if they do not reach the level reached before air transport became affordable. It continues to be strenuous and dangerous, though less so than before. Only Muslims who have the necessary financial means and can make the pilgrimage without risking hardship to any of their dependents are required to go to hajj.

Visits to Islam's holiest sites in Mecca and Medina for the week-long Hajj have brought Saudi Arabia \$12 billion a year, according to official data.

In 2022, the Saudi authorities limited the annual pilgrimage to 60,000 international participants, compared to 2.5 million before the pandemic.

2.3.2. Christian Pilgrimages

Jerusalem - The Center of the Christian World

Jerusalem is the meeting place between heaven and earth, and the place where Jesus was crucified, so the emotional and spiritual dimensions are downright overwhelming for every believer who arrives there. Even today, Jerusalem stands at the meeting point between three important religions: Jewish, Christian and Muslim, and it is an area still full of tensions, but visited by tourists from all over the world. The most important places of pilgrimage for Orthodox believers are the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Mount Golgotha and the Dome of the Rock, but also the city where Jesus was born, Nazareth. Orthodox tourists want to get here especially during Easter, when on Good Friday Christians follow the Way of the Cross, which starts from the Ecce Homo Monastery and ends at the Holy Sepulcher.

Before the pandemic, the number of tourists visiting Israel exceeded all expectations, reaching 4.5 million tourists from all over the world in 2019. In 2020, statistics show that only about 830,000 tourists visited Israel, and in 2021 their number was even half, given that the Holy Land was among the first countries to announce the closure of borders on March 9, 2020, and travel has been restricted for more than 18 months in an attempt to protect its citizens and prevent the spread of the virus. More than half of the tourists who arrive annually in the Holy Land are Christian pilgrims.

Rome - The Eternal City for Millions of Believers

Rome is, after Jerusalem, the most important place of pilgrimage for Christians from all over the world. Christian vestiges from the first centuries and places dedicated to the memory of the first Christian martyrs are everywhere in Rome.

Vatican City in Italy is visited by nearly 4.2 million people every year. It is a place of pilgrimage and religious tourism for many devout Catholics. The city is an independent city-state located in the middle of Rome. The city's captivating beauty and historical relevance attract tourists and architecture enthusiasts in droves from all over the world. The city is home to the pope and is also considered the spiritual center of the Catholic Church.

El Camino – The Third Great Pilgrimage in the World

El Camino, which means "the road" or "the way" in Spanish, is about 900 km and starts in France, from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, crosses the Pyrenees, crosses Spain from East to West until it reaches a magnificent and famous cathedral, called Santiago de Compostela, where the mortal remains of Saint James are buried.

This route annually attracts 150,000 pilgrims and almost 3 million tourists, and their number is constantly increasing. Their motivations are different: nature, culture, dating, adventure, physical challenge and rediscovering simple joys.

Lourdes - The Place where Miracles still Happen

Lourdes does not have a religious history of thousands of years, as it happens with Jerusalem or Rome, and it is just a small town, located in the southwest of France. However, it is one of the most important places of pilgrimage in recent years for Catholic pilgrims, but also for Christians from all over the world, and this is due to the miracles that still happen here. The miraculous healings in Lourdes were confirmed by doctors and sometimes even by church authorities.

2.3.3 Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the most important religions globally, with a huge number of practitioners both in its home country of India and in the West somewhat more recently, but with a number of practitioners that is constantly growing.

Kumbha Mela (translated as "the feast of the ascier") is a most important Hindu pilgrimage. Hindus meet to take a bath in the waters of the sacred river. This festival is considered to be the largest assembly in the world. About 100 million people are present from all over India. The festival is held every three years in one of the four sacred places by rotation: Haridwar, Allahabad, Nashik, and Ujjain. So, every 12 years the festival takes place in one of these locations. Ardh (half) takes place every 6 years, only at Haridwar and Allahabad. The sacred rivers in these places are the Ganges at Haridwar, the confluence (Bangam) of the Gang with Yamuna and the mystic Saraswati at Allahabad, Raul Godawari in Nashik, and the Shipra River at Ujjain.

The pilgrimage takes almost a month and a half. Hinduism is believed that nectar drops fall into the sea. To bathe in these rivers means to clean yourself. The great Hindus Kumbha Mela pilgrimage is one of the most important in India.

Religious tourism Varanasi temple attracts more than 22 million visitors every year.

2.3.4 Buddhism. Initiatic Pilgrimages

Buddhism originated in India and spread to much of Central and Southeast Asia.

In the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, pilgrimages occupy an important place, being considered very powerful ways of connection and spiritual evolution. The spiritual journey aims to move the seeker from his familiar environment, to a foreign and uncomfortable one, which will cause him a direct confrontation with his patterns of thinking and feeling.

For Buddhists, Bodh Gaya is the most important pilgrimage destination, the other three holy places being: Kushinagar, Lumbini and Sarnath.

Buddhist pilgrimages, like those of other religions, are undertaken for a wide range of reasons. For some Buddhists, pilgrimage is a discipline that promotes spiritual development; for others it is the fulfillment of a vow made, for example, to facilitate recovery from an illness; and for others it is simply an occasion for travel and pleasure. Whatever its motivations, pilgrimage remains one of the most important Buddhist practices. Among all the countries on this globe, India seems to have a different status. In the 1960s, with the disembarkation of the Beatles, under the pretext of a transcendental meditation, it definitively entered the map of spiritual pilgrims from all over the world. But, since the 19th century, something was special about this place in the eyes of Westerners.

Buddhism is not only an established religion, but also a way of life. Today, millions of Europeans and Americans visit India annually, looking for something difficult to rationally explain. Some call it "enlightenment", others - "self-discovery", finally, others simply call it "happiness". Therefore, tourists from different countries have visited India to witness its incredible traditions and cultural heritage, the factors that laid the foundations of the Indian tourism sector. Tourists from different countries have visited India to witness its incredible traditions and cultural heritage, the factors that laid the foundations of the Indian tourism sector. According to the Indian Tourism Statistics Report 2022, in 2019 the total number of travellers who visited India was 17.91 million, of which 10.58 million were foreign visitors, and in 2021, a total of 7 million travellers visited India, of whom 1.52 million were foreigners.

2.3.5 Sacred Places for Shinto

Shintoism is a purely Japanese religion; its origins can be found in the ancient history of Japan. It is one of the oldest religions in the world. The Japanese have a strong love for their country and believe that the islands of Japan were the first divine creation. Moreover, Shinto does not teach that no other land is divine, Japan being thus unique in the world. So, it is not surprising that Shintoism is not popular outside of Japan.

The Grand Shrine of Ise is the most holy Shinto site in Japan. The shrine has been rebuilt in the same place every 20 years since the third or fourth century. Shinto, Japan's unofficial national religion, is devoted to spiritual beings called "kami." Shinto shrines were traditionally simple wooden structures built to house the kami and as a place to hold rituals and celebrations. Shinto's holy places typically include natural formations, such as rocks, waterfalls, caves, forests and mountains.

3. Case Study: Romania

In the Middle Ages, under the conditions of the feudal system, tourism began to appear sporadically on the territory of Romania, more restricted than in antiquity, due to the insecurity of the roads and mystical conceptions. The collective tourism activity takes place, above all, in the form of pilgrimage tourism. The documents of the time also indicate a form of collective, mass tourism, determined by a series of secular, ethno-folkloric manifestations, on the occasion of some festive, traditional moments: folkloric celebrations, fairs, etc.

If before the Revolution of 1989, pilgrimage in Romania was not encouraged, and the Romanian Orthodox Church did not have the necessary means to organize pilgrimages on the territory of this country, let alone outside the national territory, today, the Romanian Patriarchate and some centres dioceses have their own pilgrimage agencies. Thus, the pilgrimage became part of the religious life of the Orthodox believers, with the multiple spiritual benefits of the pilgrimage, but also the social effects it produces.

The pilgrimage took off after 1990, not only because of the full religious freedom enjoyed by the faithful, but also because of the mobility of people. The circulation of people is increasingly easier, and, on the other hand,

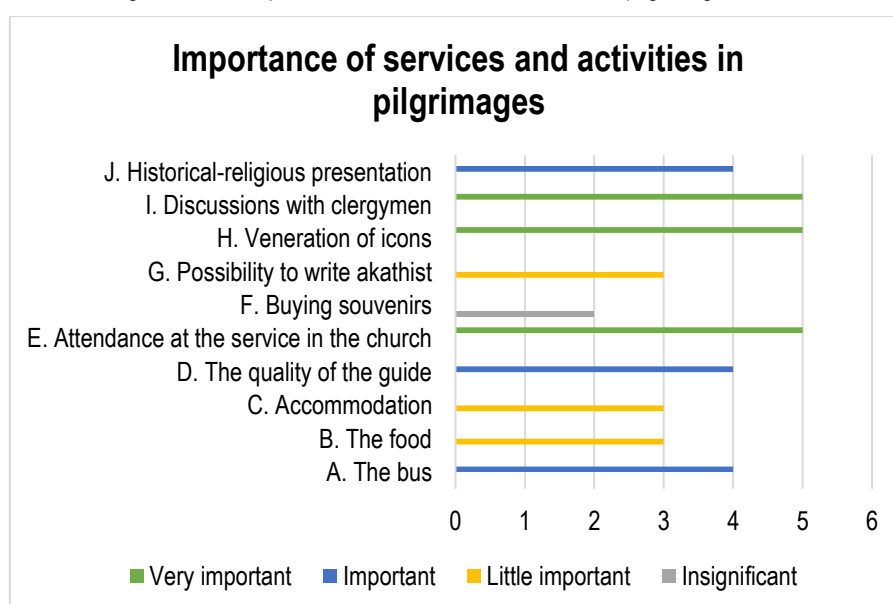
after 1990, other places of pilgrimage appeared, and here we refer to the tomb of Father Arsenie Boca from the Prislop Monastery.

In Romania, cultural and religious tourism benefits from a unique heritage of objectives belonging to the Orthodox, Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical or Jewish religions, with numerous wooden churches included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and a unique objective worldwide - the Happy Cemetery in Săpânța.

In Romania, there is religious tourism and pilgrimage in strong development. There are many offers, and they are prepared a year in advance, in order to have time for registration, the groups have between 40-55 places. The tourist packages offer: accommodation, half-board meals, transport, professional guide, guide, priest-guide and accompanying priest, various souvenirs, entrances to the objectives and other joys of the soul. The promotion part is a bit atypical, it is done online, at the offices of the agencies, but also through the priests in the parishes who display and promote these pilgrimages, there are also groups already formed by the priests who want to travel together with the parish communities as to have the peace of mind that they are traveling with people they know.

According to a study (Vana, M.V., 2021) on 11 services or activities carried out, to see the degree of importance for pilgrims, let's know what needs to be emphasized in pilgrimages and religious tourism. Very important are the preparation of the guide, the atmosphere created participation in the services, discussions with the clergy, prayer and singing in the group.

Figure 1. The importance of services and activities in pilgrimages in Romania



The historical-religious presentation, the worship of icons, the coach is considered important; accommodation and food are considered less important, and the purchase of souvenirs is considered unimportant, but which must still have an allocated time during the program.

3.2 Great Pilgrimages in Romania

3.2.1 The pilgrimage of St. Parascheva from Iasi

Saint Pious Parascheva was a martyr from the 2nd century. The Saint is venerated in the Romanian Orthodox Church and in other Eastern Rite churches. She was born at the end of the 10th century in the village of Epivat, Thrace, not far from Constantinople.

The pilgrimage to St. Parascheva is the largest in the country. The pilgrimage attended by tens of thousands of believers, both from Romania and abroad, takes place around the Cathedral of the Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Bucovina in Iasi, on October 14. People wait up to 20 hours to spend a few moments in the presence of the relics of Saint Parascheva.

In 2022, the number of pilgrims was over 300,000.

During the pilgrimage days, fairs, conferences, shows, and fireworks are also organized in Iași.

3.2.1 The Assumption Pilgrimage from the Nicula Monastery

The Assumption Pilgrimage is the largest Orthodox pilgrimage in Transylvania, organized every year on August 15.

Thousands of Orthodox and Greek-Catholic believers participate in the pilgrimage that takes place every year on the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary to the Nicula Monastery, where the miracle-working Icon of the Virgin Mary is located, which tradition says has healing powers.

During the 4 days of pilgrimage, around 70,000 people come.

3.2.3 The Pentecost Pilgrimage from Șumuleu Ciuc

The pilgrimage from Șumuleu-Ciuc is the pilgrimage of the modern era, which at the beginning was the most important religious event of the Szeklers, and over the centuries it became the most significant Christian movement, affecting the entire Hungarian population.

The service is held every year on Pentecost at the church in Șumuleu-Ciuc and at the altar built in the saddle between the two peaks of the Șumuleu-Ciuc mountain, in the presence of hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Roman Catholic and other faith participants.

Groups of pilgrims arrive from Transylvania, from Hungary, from Europe and from all over the world – Slovakia, Germany, Brazil, Australia, the Philippine Islands, Kenya, etc. The link between the pilgrims is Christianity and the need for cultural and spiritual replenishment. Pentecost combines Roman Catholic religious characteristics with elements of popular religion.

The history of the pilgrimage from Șumuleu-Ciuc dates back to 1442, when Pope Eugene IV gave his consent for the pilgrimage to those people who helped the Franciscan order in building the church. In the 17th century, the attraction area of the pilgrimage extended only to the Catholic localities in the region of Ciucului, Gheorgheni, Odorhei, Trei Scaune and the area of Nirajului de Sus. The Ciangai from Moldova have been participating in the event only since the 18th century. The construction of the road and rail network in the 19th century attracted even more believers to the event.

The Catholic Pentecost pilgrimage from Șumuleu Ciuc is considered the largest in Central and Eastern Europe and has a history of over 450 years. At the beginning of the calendar summer, over 100,000 believers from all over Europe come to offer a collective prayer to the Virgin Mary. The event takes place at the Marian Sanctuary in Șumuleu, which has a statue of the Holy Virgin in the center.

3.2.4 Pilgrimage to the Grave of Arsenie Boca

Arsenie Boca was born in 1910, and for his beliefs he was arrested, tortured by the former Securitate and then expelled from the monastery during the communist regime.

The Prislop Monastery became a place of pilgrimage for Romanians from all corners of the country, identifying with the personality of Father Arsenie Boca. People come here throughout the year to pray (around 100,000 every weekend). Most of them come here on November 28, the Memorial Day of Arsenie Boca.

The pilgrimage to this monastery, especially to the tomb of the priest-monk, takes place all the time, regardless of the season or a certain calendar holiday. Thousands of believers, who come from all over the country to worship in honour of the one considered the "Saint of Transylvania", wait tens of minutes in line for a few seconds of prayer in front of the priest's trinity.

3.2.5. Other Religious Places that Can Be Visited in Romania

Religious tourism is a growing segment of the Romanian tourism industry, with a significant number of visitors visiting the country for its diverse religious and cultural heritage. Here are some numbers related to religious tourism in Romania:

1. The Romanian Orthodox Church is the dominant religion in Romania, and the country is home to over 16,000 religious monuments, including monasteries, churches, and fortified churches.

2. The city of Sighișoara, known for its well-preserved medieval citadel, is a popular destination for religious tourists.

3. The painted monasteries of Bucovina, such as Voroneț, Sucevița, and Moldovița, are a UNESCO World Heritage site and attract thousands of visitors each year.

4. The Black Church in Brașov, one of the largest Gothic churches in Eastern Europe, is another popular religious destination.

5. The Happy Cemetery in the village of Săpânța is a unique cemetery with brightly colored tombstones and whimsical epitaphs that attracts both religious and non-religious visitors.

According to a recent study, around 20% of foreign tourists visiting Romania in 2019 cited religious and cultural heritage as their primary reason for traveling to the country.

3.2.5 Romanian Pilgrims in the World

The top of the foreign destinations preferred by pilgrims is opened by Israel. Here, the pilgrim's steps go to the places that remain symbols of Christianity: Cana of Galilee, Nazareth, Mount Tabor, the Mount of Beatitudes, Capernaum, Jordan (the Baptism of the Lord), Via Dolorosa, the Church of the Resurrection, Bethlehem (the birthplace of Jesus) and Mount Zion. Next is Greece, where pilgrims can visit and worship in churches where the relics of well-known saints who are attributed healing powers are exposed for worship: Mount Athos, the Church of Saint Demetrius (Thessaloniki), the Church of Saint Spyridon (Corfu Island), the Church Saint Andrew the Apostle (Patras), Saint Nectaria (Eghina), the monastery of Saint Ephrem the New (Nea Makri), the Church of Saint John the Russian (Prokopi).

Another destination sought by Romanian pilgrims is Turkey. Here you can visit the cell of Saint Simeon the Pillar, the underground galleries of the city of Kaymakli, the Church of Saints Constantine and Elena, the necropolis and the Hierapolis Citadel, the Church of the Holy Apostle Philip, the Ephesus Citadel, the Church of the Mother of God (where the IV Ecumenical Council was held in the year 431), the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Saint Sophia Cathedral and others.

But, apart from the organized pilgrimages, if we look at the statistics, we notice that one of the important criteria for Romanian tourists when they prepare to go on a vacation, whether it's a city break or a 7-day vacation, is to be able to visit a church, a cathedral or, why not, a holy place.

3.3 The Economic Dimension of Religious Tourism in Romania

Romania's rich, varied and unique cultural traditions include a great diversity of rituals, celebrations, events and cultural products. These are well known and attractive to the public in Romania and cause the offer of tourist packages available around religious holidays, such as Easter or Christmas, when rural destinations (where traditions are well preserved) become centers of interest for short-term travelers (Maramureș and Bucovina, for example). Tourism for experiencing these traditions is less developed, even in the context of members of the diaspora (who return home for the holidays and who could bring with them groups of people from the countries they emigrated to), with only a few dedicated packages available and promoted.

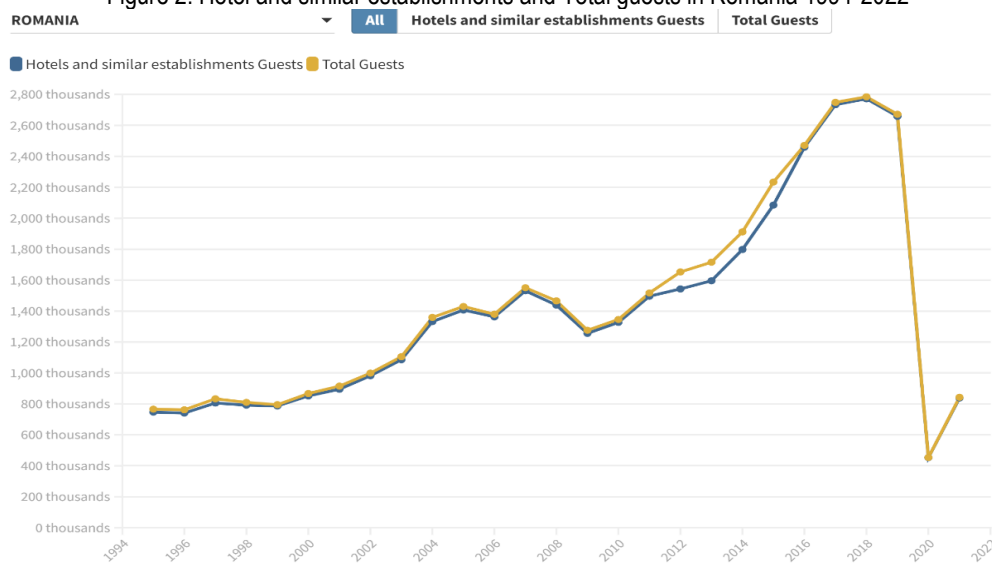
According to the studies carried out, in the top of pilgrims' preferences for religious tourism (more than 3 days) are: Romania (Maramures, Bucovina etc.) Israel, Greece, Turkey-Cappadocia, Egypt, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova. The offers of travel agencies and pilgrimages are different, and no clear distinction can be made between travel agencies and pilgrimage agencies. The offer of travel agencies is diversified, tourists being able to choose religious-cultural circuits in which several types and forms of tourism are combined, but there are also many offers strictly for pilgrimages.

In Romania, some agencies promote thematic offers such as: the Circuit of UNESCO wooden churches, the Circuit of miracle-working icons, the Circuit of historical monasteries in Maramureș, pilgrimages with participation in various services, Holy Communion, Vigil, Liturgy, participation in holy days. Also, within religious and pilgrimage tourism are activities involving tourists/pilgrims, such as pew responses, craft workshops of painting, sculpture, pottery, weaving, threshing workshops and many other activities.

Also, there are not enough possibilities to register the number of pilgrims and tourist traffic to these destinations. A study that links the economic dimension to that of religious tourism in Romania was done in 2018 by Giusca (Giusca *et al.* 2018). The results obtained shape out five distinct area of concentration, with relevant examples of religious edifices, which earn from the exploitation of cultural-historic and religious attributes.

According to UNTWO and NIS data, the number of Romanian and foreign tourists is increasing from one year to the next, the share of Romanian tourists being on the rise. Due to its development, religious tourism has a lot of economic implications for tourism in Romania (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Hotel and similar establishments and Total guests in Romania 1994-2022



Source: <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/key-tourism-statistics>

This study was carried out by studying the statistical and financial data found on the specialized websites of relevant institutions in Romania (Appendix 1). It is focused on travel agencies that mainly offer pilgrimages. We add that there are also large travel agencies that offer such services. There are also numerous cases in which the Church prefers to organize these pilgrimages by itself, the group to be accompanied by a priest, who during the journey will carry out specific activities: prayers, discussions on spiritual topics, etc. In this case, collateral activities are reduced to a minimum, which makes this approach collateral to tourism.

Figure 3. Annual income from pilgrimage in Romania

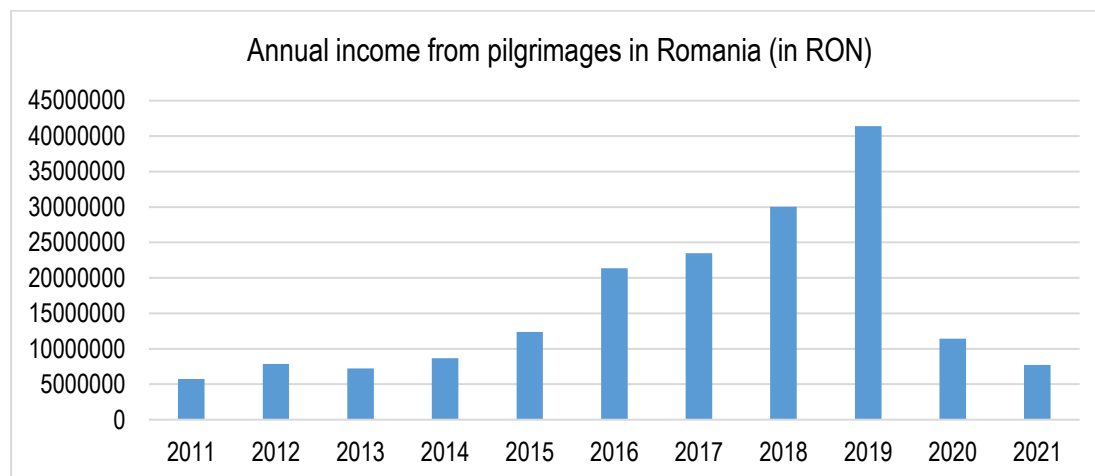


Figure 4. Trend line for 2011 – 2021.

a Linear evolution.

b Exponential evolution

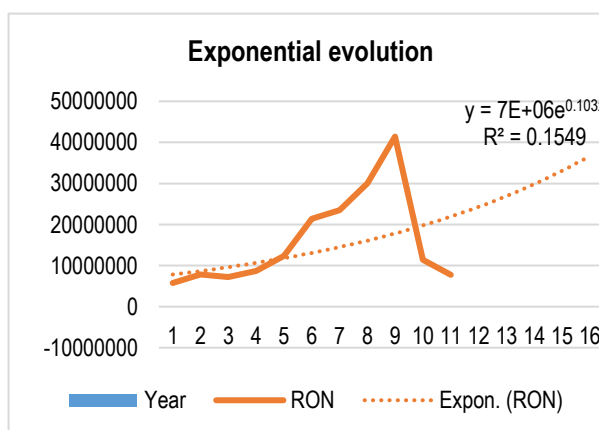
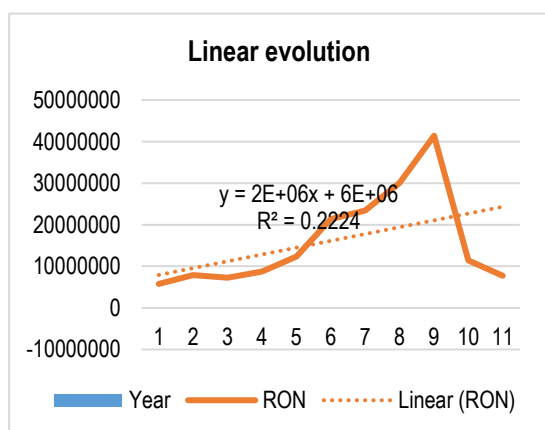
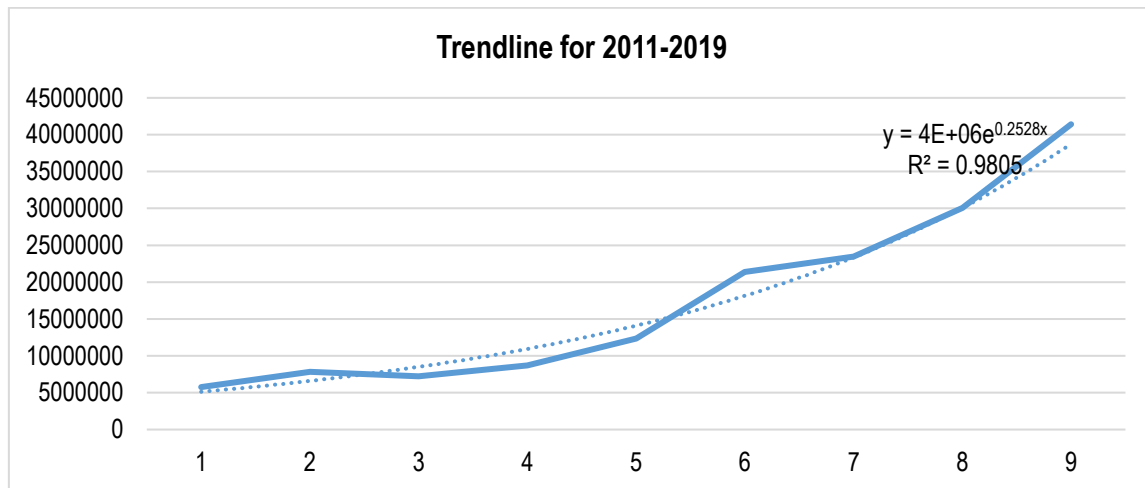
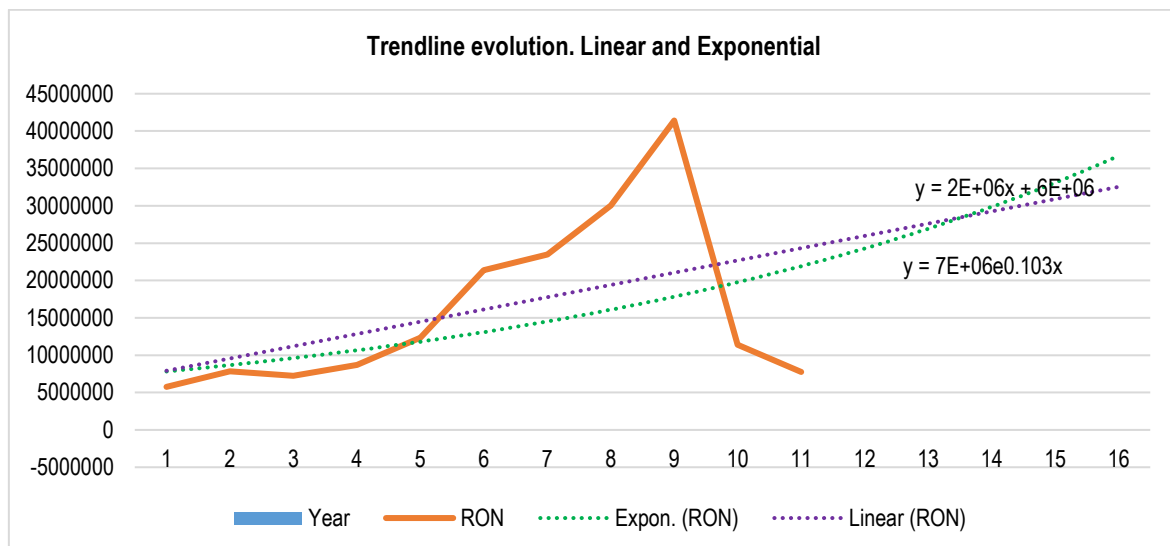


Figure 5. Trendline for 2011 – 2019



We note that if we make an exception for the years in which travel was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 and 2021), the trend is strongly increasing, even exponentially. In Figure 4 an exponential trendline is used to illustrate the increasing amount of turnover by religious tourism activity in 2011-2019 period. Note that the R-squared value is 0.9805, which means that the line fits the data almost perfectly.

Figure 6. Trendline evolution. Linear and Exponential



Because religious tourism demand is increasing, revenue increases considerably both in the fact that a lot of products such as icons, mirrors, prayer books etc. are sold to tourists as well as the fact that they pay a tax to visit the monasteries. From the many handicraft activities: painting icons, painting eggs, crafting wood making barrels, carving in wood traditional musical instruments, pottery, making of popular masks results in a lot of objects (painted icons, varnished eggs, wooden barrels, musical instruments, black clay pots, and popular masks), which will be sold to tourists, contributing to increased merchant revenues.

Conclusion

Despite the positive or negative positions towards pilgrimages, in the following centuries the practice of pilgrimage will continue uninterrupted and without major innovations, with minor changes generated by various cultural, social and political changes.

Pilgrims of the 21st century happen to sleep in three-star hotels, travel by plane, write their travel memoirs on the computer and communicate with those at home via mobile phone. The duration of their trip is well established, the travel conditions are favorable, everything is well planned.

According to the study carried out, the pilgrimage in Romania is continuously increasing, although according to the population census carried out in 2022 the population has decreased (the Romanians are 1.1

million less), the demographic aging index depreciated by almost 20 percentage points and the percentages of those who belong to different religions have also changed.

Extremely crowded, difficult in places, changeable, 2022 was the year in which the gradual return to normality occurred, after the two years of the pandemic in which travel was marked by restrictions and prohibitions. The announcement of relaxation measures, news long awaited by Romanians eager for holidays without special conditions, was not enough because Russia invaded Ukraine, an event that led Romanians to show solidarity and mobilize to give help to Ukrainian refugees. The initiative was made possible thanks to hoteliers and holiday homeowners who housed refugees in their accommodation units, offering them, even temporarily, a safe environment and protection.

Religious tourism in Romania has high potential and the improvement of the transport infrastructure, the diversification of the tourist offers, the creation of innovative packages and the adoption of effective measures for the qualification of personnel and limiting their migration are required.

Effective partnerships, in sacred places, can benefit local communities and encourage their sustainable development and socio-economic empowerment in the long run. It is necessary to develop specific policies for protection and management of religious and sacred sites that consider the distinct sacred or spiritual value associated with the place, as a key factor for their conservation.

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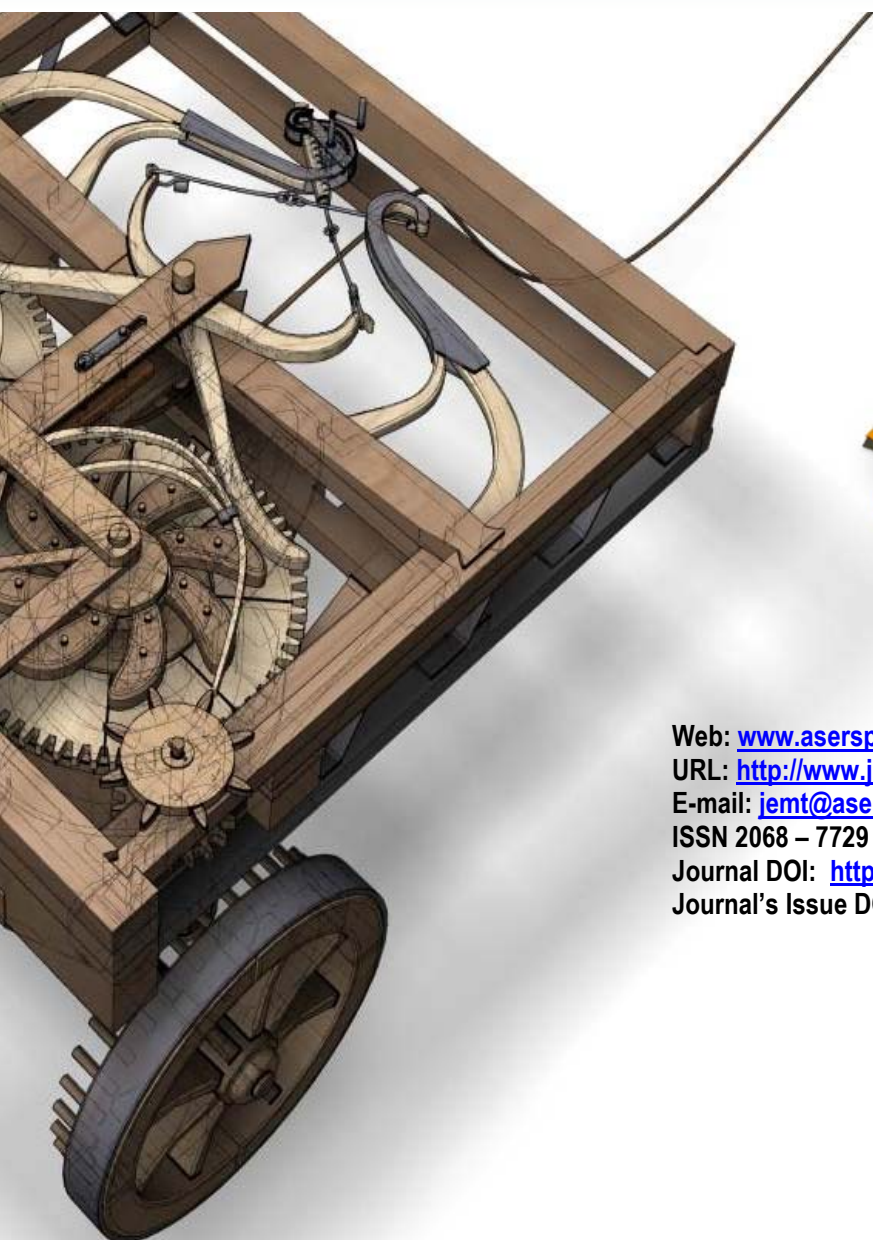
Appendix 1.

The travel agency	The Turnover (RON)										
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Basilica Travel	441 562	631 440	1 058 666	2 090 936	4 203 475	5 459 485	6 570 618	9 905 610	11 155 419	2 481 794	2 158 921
Biroul de pelerinaje	1 428 755	2 019 649	1 119 602	1 145 454	1 317 445	817 251	1 251 019	1 665 746	1 896 846	1 896 846	100
Vacanta (partener Patriarhie)	3 020 918	3 194 278	2 867 732	3 831 629	3 928 634	3 778 503	1 520 897	3 322 945	3 654 490	1 307 252	2 207 361
Agentia de pelerinaje Samaria	58 454	69 258	52 256	15 965	167 765	63 371	212 417	241 227	238 307	238 307	259 411
Centrul de pelerinaj Renasterea Cluj	185 726	1 134 886	1 451 982	351 286	567 541	7 090 550	11 034 307	12 043 842	20 728 490	3 527 427	816 172
Pelerin Invest	265 676	361 985	261 223	790 593	1 661 787	3 667 599	2 309 708	2 114 441	2 377 936	1 527 452	1 752 847
Pelerin	360 765	346 291	72 630	63 231	66 803	57 228	78 602	47 985	40 202	26 968	20 618
Agentia de turism Sf. Nicolae	-	89 888	216 212	219 024	210 659	218 392	211 454	251 509	319 568	113 427	203 269
Suflet pelerin	-	-	56 176	13 139	15 477	8 847	5 475	12 568	29 357	14 190	8 413
Avraam Travel	-	-	79 400	175 186	217 593	209 714	273 051	443 184	976 468	277 761	517 652
Total	5761856	7847675	7235879	8696443	12357179	21370940	23467548	30049057	41417083	11411424	7,741,495

Source: <https://www.listafirme.ro>

Note: In Romania, in addition to these tourism agencies established as companies, there are Pilgrimage Centers corresponding to the Patriarchates. Among them are: the Partos Pilgrimage Center Timisoara, the Nicodim Pilgrimage Center, Craiova and many others. Therefore, this table presents a (significant) part of the financial data corresponding to pilgrimage tourism in Romania.

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