

Study of Romanian Pilgrimage Tourism Products – A Cultural Behavior Approach

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Abstract

This study will concentrate on the Romanian pilgrimage tourism supply, in order to identify the characteristics of pilgrimage products. Using the Hofstede's approach for Romanian society, we develop a meta-analysis and a systematic review of the most important research studies done on this topic for Romanian culture. As a result, we have determined the weight of each cultural dimension and their effects on the religious tourism and pilgrimage behavior. We correlate the findings from Hofstede's theory with the data about the supply of pilgrimages in our country: main pilgrimage routes, services provided by the hospitality units, seasonality, length of stay, tourism and religious objectives the pilgrims may visit.

The collectivism tendency and high uncertainty avoidance represent the main cultural aspects having an influence on pilgrims' behavior and on the Romania's supply of pilgrimages. As a result, most of the pilgrimages are concentrated in few destinations with a strong spiritual sense for an orthodox, have a small length of stay, while the services provided are customized to fulfill the pilgrims' basic needs and emphasize the idea of sharing resources between pilgrims. The presence of a priest as a spiritual guide may lead to an improved pilgrimage experience.

Keywords: Hofstede's dimensions, cultural behavior, pilgrimage, religious tourism, supply.

JEL classification: L83, E03

Introduction

The pilgrimage is a constancy of humanity. Through pilgrimage people try to meet divinity in a spiritual way and gain the spiritual salvation. The Italian psychiatrist Claudio Rise emphasized that pilgrimage is not a spiritual fitness, but the demonstration of human need to find out for themselves the answers to the great questions of existence, starting on the go to a certain destination.

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Religious pilgrimage is present in almost all major world religions such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism. In all the religions of the world we find sanctuaries with a special sacrality. These sanctuaries are mostly related to the life and work of these founders of religions, the prominent deities and existence of sacred relics. For Christians, the most important places of pilgrimage are related to the life and work of Jesus Christ, respectively the Holy Land, Jerusalem, Betlehem and Nazareth. Pilgrimage in the Islamic world is one of the "five pillars of Islam," a fundamental obligation for every Muslim believer, adult, male or female, healthy, and with available resources. Within Islam religion there are three "sacred cities: Mekka, Medina and Jerusalem. The pilgrimage to Mekka has pre-Islamic origins, being declared mandatory for residents since 630 b.c., by Mahomed. On the territory of India there are many places of pilgrimage, especially for Hinduism religion. For 2009, pilgrimage tourism was estimated at 44.5% from the total export earnings of Indian tourism and accounted 22.5% of their total foreign exchange earnings. Nowadays the interest for pilgrimage increased a lot (Bruner, 1994) and religious tourism became one of the fastest growing segments in travel today. If until 1945 it has participated in the annual pilgrimage to Mekka around 40 thousands of people, in 2005 it was estimated a participation of three million people. Moreover, the pilgrimages to Fatima, Santiago de Compostela (the number of pilgrims increased from 4918 in 1990 to 114025 in 2010 (Zapponi, 2010)) or Lourdes are well known destinations for West European pilgrims. According to the World Tourism Organization, around 330 million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites every year. Also there is an increase of religious events worldwide which determined a development of religious tourism. In 2006, according to the Religious Conference Management Association, more than 14.7 million people attended religious meetings, an increase of more than 10 million from 1994 with 4.4 million attendees (Vijayanand, 2012).

Appreciated in some religions (orthodox and catholic) or rejected by others (protestant), the pilgrimage draws attention continuously both in Christianity and in Islam. In the last decade, in Romania, the pilgrimages and the religious trips registered a significant increase. The pilgrimage was and it will continue to be an important issue in the future – the pilgrimages to Nicula, Rohia or Iași are well known by all the Romanians.

According to Romania National Institute of Statistics (NIS), after a significant drop in 2009 compared to 2008, the number of pilgrimages organized by travel agents and tour operators increased gradually (except 2012) (National Institute of Statistics, 2014). Analyzing the 2011 report of NIS regarding the demand of Romanian tourists, we noticed that only 2.4% out of total trips had religion as a main purpose and 75% of the pilgrimages/religious trips were organized by the travelers themselves (National Institute of Statistics, 2012). Moreover, an INSCOP survey regarding the Romanians' confidence on public institutions emphasized a gradual decrease of residents' in church from 85% in 2008 to approximately 60% in 2014 (INSCOP, 2014). On the other side, Romania has important religious and cultural resources to boost the involvement of society in religious trips/pilgrimages –

according to World Economic Forum, Romania placed 33 in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index – number of World Heritage cultural sites – with 8 sites registered, half of them being directly related to religion and churches (World Economic Forum, 2013). Lately, The Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church has developed pilgrimage centers, enriching the supply of pilgrimages and religious trips and providing, in the same time, a proper alternative for the Romanians' who used to organize by their own the pilgrimage. Other important factors in the evolution of pilgrimages are the Romanians' "prominent spirit of religiosity" (Pohoată, et al., 2013), their culture and values.

As a result, there are a lot of factors affecting the evolution of pilgrimages in our country, making difficult to emphasize the total effect of pilgrimages on economy and society. To bring some light in this issue, we will study the demand and supply of pilgrimages. In this paper, we will explore the supply side, analyzing the characteristics of the pilgrimage products, while in a future research we will develop a study of pilgrimage demand.

1. Literature review

Economic, cultural and informational development of today society led to an emphasised interest by finding spiritual way and defining identity. In this context development, the religious tourism become a complex phenomenon that plays an important role in small local communities and stirs the interest of researchers in tourism.

World Tourism Organization (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 1985) gives a wider definition of religious tourism stressing on the motivation of travelers as essentially religious events, festivals, sacred places and pilgrimage. According to Blackwell (Blackwell, 2007) the religious tourism includes many types of journeys which are motivated by a religious interest to a destination which is a religious place or gained the image of a religious symbol. A classification of these attractions, proposed by Shackley (Shackley, 2001), clarifies more the concept of religious tourism:

- natural phenomena (lakes, mountains, islands, forests),
- buildings and sights built for the purpose of religious rites,
- buildings with religious motives,
- special events with signs of religious happenings in „non-religious“ places,
- religious secular monuments dedicated to tragedies or politically significant events (prisons of Nelson Mandela on Robben Island).

A comprehensive perspective of the motivations was discussed by tourism expert Claudine Chaspoul (Chaspoul & all, 1993), who identified four main interests for religious tourism:

- spiritual perspective – to venerate and approach to divinity,
- the sociological perspective – to learn and understand better the history and dogmas of the religious group which belongs to,

- the cultural perspective – to visit places, sanctuaries, monuments in order to understand the religious symbols, cultural events, ethnological impact etc.,
- geographical perspective – to identify changes in the behavior of religious groups and adapt tourism offer to the market needs.

Many studies and researchers have attempted to understand better the religious tourism phenomenon and to define the pilgrimage as a distinct part of it. The most known definition of pilgrimage is the journey to a place with religious significance with the purpose of performing religious rites and rituals or to fulfill a spiritual need. In comparison, a religious tourist visits these sacred places for a range of reasons, but mainly cultural and educational (Dorneanu, 2012), (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). So the pilgrimage is determined first of all by faith and spiritual consideration. We can say that is a different perspective between the pilgrim and the pilgrim-tourist, like Cohen (Cohen, 1992), Dorneanu (Dorneanu, 2012) and Barber (Barber, 1993) argued; the pilgrim peregrinates by conviction, braving physical dangers and pushing its limits for a better self-knowledge. This is another feature for the pilgrims, which are willing to bear a certain amount of pain during the journey and repeatedly pray to their ditties (Svoboda, et al., 2013).

According to Solomon „Nihil sub sole novum” (Eccl.1, 10), the pilgrimage motivation is simple and real – the miracle and the cure. The pilgrim is searching the miracle, the marvel, the amazing. The destinations known for miraculous icons, relics, holy water springs or for the extraordinary grace the visitors are feeling are the most popular between pilgrims. The pilgrimage to Nicula Monastery from Cluj County is a very good example in this sense. The miracle-working icon of Virgin Mary from this monastery is attracting hundreds of thousands of persons every year, the peak of the visitors being in 15 August, at the feast of the Virgin Mary Assumption. The pilgrims incentive is the miracle, “the spiritual benefit” they can acquire as a result of their efforts.

During the medieval age, the pilgrimage was also seen as a punishment for the heretics. The motivation of pilgrimage in that times was represented by the spiritual purification a heretic could obtain through the effort and sacrifice (sometimes their life could be threaten) he will do during a pilgrimage to The Holy Places (Dupront, 1967). The idea of pilgrimage as a punishment is also present in some of the inquisitorial processes of the centuries XIII-XIV ((Villehardouin, 2002), (Pales-Gobilliard, 2002), (Gui, 1926), (Fournier, 1978)).

Due to the fact that the pilgrim-tourist peregrinates primarily for a spiritual experience, Cohen (Cohen, 1992) strengthened the main difference toward traveler-tourist as the aim of the holiday or journey. The pilgrim peregrinates toward their socio-cultural center, which gives the opportunity of deeper sensation, relationship and understanding of the meaning of life. This is the case of a formal pilgrimage center. Like Pope John Paul II pointed out in his message to the 23rd World Day of Tourism, tourism and religious tourism could compensate the lack of human contact, which people often miss in their daily life.

While the idea of differentiation between tourism and pilgrimage has emerged in the 70s, the new research works ((Bilu, 1998), (Kong, 2001), (Bănică, 2014)), which have explored interesting political, cultural, behavioral and economical aspects of these subjects, have argued that “the ties are unclear, blurred and poorly classified” (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). In 2004, Badone and Roseman claimed that: “Rigid dichotomies between pilgrimage and tourism or pilgrims and tourists no longer seem tenable in the shifting world of postmodern travel” (Badone & Roseman, 2004). Even more they tried to highlight the similarities between these two categories of travel that have frequently been regarded as conceptual opposites.

Although many researchers consider that the difference between religious pilgrimage and tourism is very narrow, they commonly agree that motivation is the main special feature. Using the theory of pull-push factors we could state that pilgrims are motivated by a push factor, while the tourist is motivated by a pull factor, respectively the location. Pilgrim is convinced that will get spiritual development only traveling to a particular place and practicing religious rituals, so personal conviction and spiritual need are the push factors which determine the individual to peregrinate. Whereas the tourist is attracted to that place for the pleasure of traveling, to relax, seeing new places, to have new experiences, to enrich cultural - these are pull factors which attract tourists in these places. Bănică (Bănică, 2014) argues that even the most faithful pilgrim will admire the landscapes or the architecture of the places, but in spite of that, the pilgrim’s journey will be full of tension and desire to reach spirituality, while the tourist’s journey will be characterized by comfort and relaxation.

For a comprehensive analysis of the religious tourism and pilgrimage motivations, another important aspect, which should be evaluated, is the influence of cultural values on its. Learning about the cultural differences in tourist behavior represents, nowadays, a key factor in effective segmentation, targeting and promotion to a specific market. Lately, has grown the interest for tourist behavior studies, which attempt to understand and explain how tourists make decisions to spend available resources, money, time, and effort in travel related products and services (Reisinger, 2009). Because, in general, cultural values specific to each nation influence significantly the social interaction among people and tourism activity involves, in a large part, social interactions among tourists and tourists-hosts, the peoples’ culture and values have also an important influence on the tourist behavior and buying habits of tourist products.

Many studies have shown that due to cultural values inherited, individuals from different cultures evaluated touristic and hospitality services performance differently (Crotts & Erdmann, 2000), have different views about what service quality means ((Tsang & Ap, 2007), (Mattila, 1999)) and present different perceptions of hotel facilities and consumer pattern of hospitality services ((Pizam & Telisman-Kosuta, 1989), (Pizam, et al., 1997), (Sheldon & Fox, 1998), (Rosenbaum & Spears, 2005), (You, et al., 2000)). In conclusion, these studies have shown that tourist behavior and travel patterns are culture specific and behavioral differences among international tourists are attributable to cultural influences. Starting from these assumptions we would try to identify, what specific characteristics have the Romanian pilgrimage products.

2. Methodology

In order to analyze the Romanians' pilgrimage behavior and their needs (from the point of services and products they would like to consume) when they peregrinate, we have considered the four dimensions of Hofstede's theory for Romanian society and we related his estimations to the structure of the pilgrimages supply. The purpose of this analysis is to identify in which way the structure of pilgrimage supply adapt to the Romanians' values, culture and behavior.

This theory is widely used for differentiating among cultures and is a comprehensive study of how values are influenced by culture. Through a meta-analysis and a systematic review of the most important research studies done on this topic for Romanian culture we have determined the weight of each cultural dimension and their effects on the religious tourism and pilgrimage behavior.

Hofstede views culture as "the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group's response to its environment". Thus culture plays a role in determining the identity of human group (Hofstede, 2001). After analyzing data from more than 40 countries, Hofstede concluded that cultural differences are reflected in four main value dimensions:

- *Power distance* (PDI) dimension refers to the extent to which a society accepts the unequal distribution of power in relationships and institutions. In the high PD cultures (Mexico, Venezuela, China), people are not equal but everyone has a rightful place. Power and authority are established and accepted. Status, conformity, supervision, and co-operation are valued. In low PDI cultures (Austria, Denmark, Sweden) inequality is minimized. People value independence, consultancy, and personality.
- *Individualism-collectivism* (IDV) dimension refers to the extent to which people emphasize their own needs. Highly individualistic cultures (the United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Netherlands) value individualism, independence, uniqueness, self-actualization, self-development, freedom, autonomy, challenge, achievement, self-orientation, and privacy. Highly collectivistic cultures (Guatemala, Pakistan, Indonesia), emphasize group goals, rights, decisions, consensus, and cooperation. Individual initiative is discouraged, and people are "we" oriented. The social and family ties are tight. The in-group members look after the other members in exchange for absolute loyalty.
- *Masculinity-femininity* (MAS) dimension refers to the extent to which a culture values "masculine" behavior, such as assertiveness, acquisition of money and material possessions, and lack of care for others, as opposed to "feminine" behavior and the quality of life, and the extent to which gender roles are differentiated. In the highly masculine cultures (Japan, Hungary, Italy), societies emphasis is on performance, growth, ambition, living to work, successful achievement, excellence and

assertiveness. In the high feminine cultures (Sweden, Norway, Netherlands) society's focus is on quality of life, welfare of others, caring and nurturing behavior, and sympathy for the unsuccessful.

- *Uncertainty avoidance* (UAI) dimension refers to the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid them. In the high UAI cultures (Greece, Portugal, Japan, France), societies feel anxious in situations which they perceive as unstructured, unclear, and unpredictable; they believe that such situations, and any other ambiguities in life, are threats that must be fought. In the low UAI cultures (Singapore, Denmark, Sweden), societies accept the uncertainty inherent in life conflict, tolerate ambiguity, and take more risk. People accept foreigners with different ideas; new ideas are not threatening. People are more flexible, do not need many rules.

Hofstede's measure of cultural value is one of the most widely used among international management and marketing scholars. According to Hofstede, these four dimensions represent the basic elements of common structure in the national cultural system. Thus, they provide an important framework not only for analyzing national culture, but also for considering the effects of cultural differences on people's conceptions and behaviors in different social activities.

For this reason we have decided to use this model for evaluating the Romanian cultural values. We have considered all the studies done for the Romanian society based on Hofstede's model, and we have selected from them only those which used a national sample. In table no.1 we present the Hofstede's estimation for Romanians', next to other results obtained in different studies.

Table 1 Synthetic review of the Romanian cultural values

Authors	Study's Year	Results for Cultural dimensions			
		PDI (0-110)	IDV (0-95)	MAS (0-95)	UAI (0-115)
Hofstede	Author's estimation	H (90)	L(30)	M(42)	H(90)
Interact-Gallup (Luca, 2005)	2005	L (33)	M(49)	L(39)	H(61)
Mihut, I., Lungescu, D. (Mihut & Lungescu, 2006)	2005	H(>75)	L(<30)	M(<50)	H(>65)
Tuclea C., et al. (Tuclea, et al., 2008)	2007	H(>56)	L(<35)	L(<33)	H(76)
Weinberger A., Nistor N. (Weiberger & Nistor, 2010)	2008	L(20)	H(67)	L(38)	H(65)
Marinescu, G. Marinescu, A. (Marinescu & Marinescu, 2013)	2008-2012	-	-	-	H

To characterize the supply of domestic pilgrimages we started from the pilgrimage routes proposed by the Romanian Patriarchate, through its travel agency (Basilica Travel) and through the pilgrimage centers of its domestic metropolitanates: Metropolitanate of Muntenia and Dobrogea (the same center as the Romanian Patriarchate – Basilica Travel), Metropolitanate of Moldova and Bucovina – Sfânta Parascheva Pilgrimage Center, Metropolitanate of Transylvania – Pilgrimage Center of Archdiocese of Alba Iulia, Metropolitanate of Cluj, Maramureș and Sălaj – Renașterea Pilgrimage Center, Metropolitanate of Oltenia – Sfântul Nicodim Pilgrimage Center and Metropolitanate of Banat – Partoș Pilgrimage Center. Then, we have analyzed the pilgrimage supply of other travel agents, using the information available on their webpages or blogs. In fact, the entire process of collecting data about domestic pilgrimages was realized using the information available on the Internet. We studied over 40 different pilgrimage routes, in 12 different destinations provided by 10 units (2 travel agencies from Bucharest, 6 pilgrimage centers and 2 blogs).

A qualitative research based on a descriptive analysis of the pilgrimage routes was conducted in order to identify the main pilgrimage destinations in Romania, the characteristics of tourism services provided (accommodation, meal, transportation and other services), the seasonality and the frequency of pilgrimage routes. In the literature about pilgrimages we have an intense debate regarding the relation between pilgrimage and tourism, reason why we try to link some of the main ideas mentioned in the literature with the situation observed in the case of Romanian pilgrimage supply.

3. Results and discussions

As we can see in the studies presented previously (see table no. 1), there is a unanimous insight regarding the collectivism tendency and high uncertainty avoidance. We will detail these two dimensions, emphasizing their effects on pilgrims' behavior and on the supply structure.

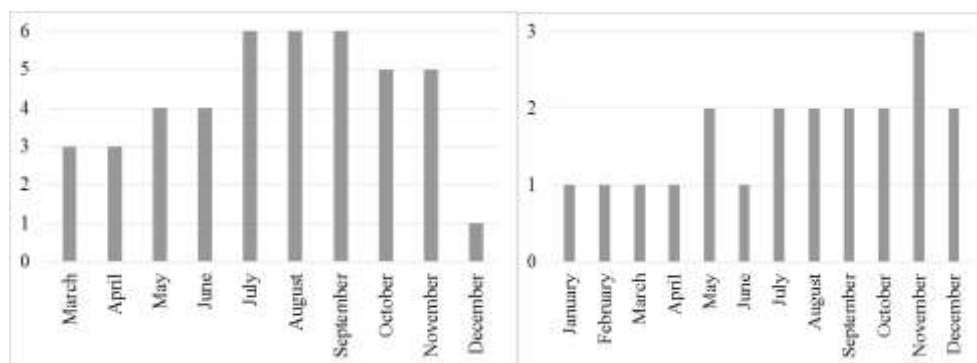
In cultures with high needs to avoid uncertainty, members of the society are not willing to take risks and devote more energy to predict the future and changes (Hofstede, 2001). Thus, as a consequence it was observed that in this type of cultures there are preferred to be used clear rules and regulations in each area of the members' life, and also instruments, methods and technics for estimating changes and possible results. Taking into consideration this dimension for analyzing the behavior of Romanian pilgrims we can present some important characteristics.

Firstly, there is *a preference to visit those location and pilgrim's places which are well known and frequented by many people* - especially when these were recommended based on a personal experience. The fact that somebody else, an acquaintance, not necessary a close friend, had experienced in a good manner such a place, is a guaranty which reduces the uncertainty distress. Thus, many sacred places, monasteries, churches became popular not only for pilgrims and religious tourism, but also for cultural tourism.

Since the development of pilgrimage centers, we noticed an important growth in the number of pilgrims, both at domestic and international level (Israel, Egypt or Greece being the Romanians' preferred pilgrims destinations). This trend is a result of the pilgrimage centers's activity, which included in their supply places with a strong spiritual sense for an orthodox - due to the place or to the Fathers a pilgrim has the possibility to meet there. Analyzing their supply, we observe that most of the pilgrimages they organize at national scale have three main destinations: Prislop Monastery, Bucovina and Moldova monasteries and Maramureş monasteries.

The Prislop Monastery is well known due to the activity of Father Arsenie Boca, who lived (1948 – 1989) and who was buried there. He is considered to be “one of the greatest illuminates of Orthodoxy”, “a saint”, “strong, unshaken in faith”, a survivor of the “terrors of the communist prisons without deviating from the righteous path he followed along with many Christians”. He was “adored by people for his sermons and miracles” and “feared by the authorities of the times due to his high influence” (Anon., n.d.).

The Prislop Monastery is a destination for pilgrims along the entire year, each month being organized at least one travel here. For example, analyzing the pilgrimages in the case of Basilica Travel (data were available only for the time span March – December 2014) and Sfantul Nicolae travel agency we notice that 38%, in the case of Basilica Travel, and 23%, in the case of Sfantul Nicolae travel agency, out of the total number of domestic pilgrimages they are organizing have as a main destination Prislop Monastery. Regarding the seasonality we observed a small increase in the number of pilgrimages during the summer, a trend similar to the traveling behavior of the domestic tourists.



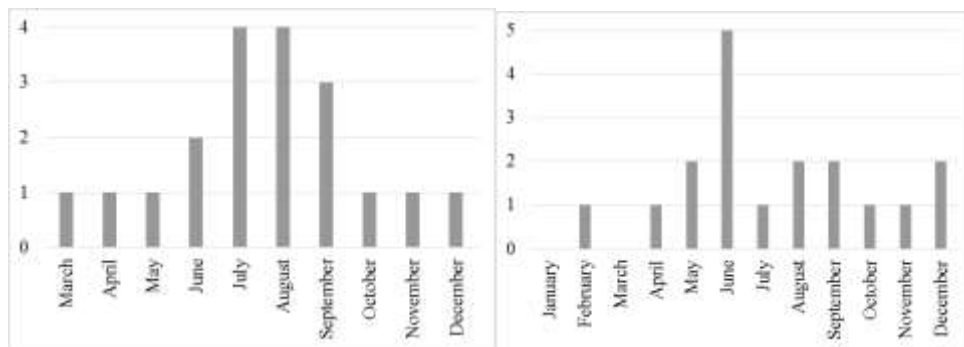
a. Basilica Travel

b. Sfantul Nicolae Travel Agency

Figure 1. Pilgrimages to Prislop Monastery – Father Arsenie Boca tumb (2014)

The second destination for domestic pilgrims, the Bucovina and Moldavia monasteries, has an important significance from religious, historic and architectural point of view. From the image of Father Cleopa Ilie (another important illuminate of Romanian Orthodoxy), to the founders of this monasteries (princes and high nobles

built them as a family burial places) and to the painting styles and colors (the famous Voronet blue, the green-red of Sucevita, the yellow of Moldovita, the red of Humor and the green of Arbore (Anon., fără an)) which made them a part of the UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List, represent significant reasons to visit these places. An important difference we identified between the pilgrimages organized by these two travel agents is the fact that in the case of ROC pilgrimage centers and travel agent the focus was on Father Cleopa Ilie and on its significance for the orthodoxy (16 out of 19 pilgrimages), while the focus in the case of the other travel agent was on visiting and praying to the most important monasteries from Bucovina and Moldova (12 out of 18 pilgrimages). The similarity between their supplies is the fact that the length of stay in the case of pilgrimages focusing on Father Cleopa is smaller (2-3 days), than in the case of pilgrimages to the Moldova and Bucovina monasteries (4-6 days).



a. Basilica Travel

b. Sfantul Nicolae Travel Agency

Figure 2. Pilgrimages to Bucovina and Moldova monasteries (2014)

The third destination for domestic pilgrimage was difficult to identify due to the fact that the Basilica Travel focuses an important number of pilgrimages around Bucharest and to regions near Bucharest: Vâlcea and Gorj monasteries, Oltenia monasteries or Dobrogea monasteries, where the length of pilgrimage was at most 2 days. Putting together the pilgrimages organized by all the 10 units analyzed, we concluded that the third destination for pilgrimage in Romania (even if some units of pilgrimage organize only one pilgrimage to that area) is to Maramureş monasteries. Here, the monasteries from Rohia and Bârsana represent the main destination for pilgrims. Also, the other wooden monasteries recognized by UNESCO as important sites of world heritage and the Merry Cemetery from Săpânța represent places visited frequently by pilgrims.

Secondly, we noticed that *the supply of domestic pilgrimages is characterized through a low level of differentiation*. We consider this is due to the pilgrims' high uncertainty avoidance, which will make them interested to know from the beginning all the details referring to the trip: accommodation facilities,

alternatives of transportation, the exact route of the trip, places, and activities, religious and touristic destinations. No matter who organizes the pilgrimage, besides the main destination monastery, the pilgrims will have the possibility to pray and visit other monasteries, churches and relics on the road, the number of visits depending on the length of pilgrimage (between 5 and 20 other monasteries and churches in the pilgrimages we analyzed). Sometimes the pilgrims have the possibility to visit the monasteries' museum, and only occasionally they have the possibility to visit some well-known tourism objectives as Merry Cemetery, Salt Mine from Turda, The Bicaz Dam and Red Lake.

In all most of the cases, the length of the pilgrimages to the main spots is reduced. Approximately 70% out of the pilgrimage routes we analyzed have a length of stay of at most three nights, no matter how far was the starting point from the main destination of pilgrimage (to Prislop Monastery, Sihastria Monastery, Nicula Monastery; to Iași or Bucharest). We consider the pilgrimage centers and travel agents had a correct approach when they designed the pilgrimages packages, because a traveler with a high uncertainty avoidance will like to visit fewer locations and spend fewer nights in the tours or during the journey in comparison with low uncertainty avoidance tourists (Litvin, et al., 2004). Moreover, looking on the data regarding the Romanians' tourism demand in 2011, will observe that 82.75% out of total pilgrimages had a length of less than three nights (National Institute of Statistics, 2012).

The role of opinion leaders in a high uncertainty-avoidance culture is much important than in others. Thus, leaders, experts and professionals are likely to be listened and followed. Facing the threat described by Bănică (Bănică, 2014), the number of pilgrims rises from year to year, while the number of persons declaring that they are members of institutionalized religions decreases, we believe, *the Romanian Orthodox Church is trying to develop the Christian education of society through pilgrimage*. This trend is already well developed in Europe and now, the data for Romania are saying the same thing: since 1992 until 2011, the number of persons declaring that they are orthodox decreased by 21.4%, while the population in Romania decreased only by 13.3% (National Institute of Statistics, 2013). In our view, the development of pilgrimages supply and the increase in their promotion activities represents a reaction of ROC to this trend. All the pilgrimages organized by the ROC are coordinated by a priest having the role of *spiritual guiding*, emphasizing to the pilgrims the religious significance of the visited places. The priest is the leader followed by the pilgrims, the person who guide them in order to achieve their purposes. Many places visited during pilgrimages have an important historical or architectural significance for the society (the painted monasteries from Bucovina or the wooden churches from Maramureș), so the role of the priest is to help the pilgrims to see first of all their spiritual / religious meaning.

Regarding the collectivism Hofstede's dimension, Romanians define themselves as members of a group, but on the other hand are interested in values as personal success and recognition. So, the collectivism degree is medium to high. As a general conclusion for the majority of the studies which analyzed this model for

different regions of Romania and areas of activity results that the following values characterized our society: sociability, communicative, less direct confrontation, willing to be part of a group and avoiding individual accountability.

Collectivists are more willing to conform to a group and consider the influence of their behavior on other people. In this context pilgrimage is also like a disclosure statement to group or community. It proves adhesion of individual to the group, respectively to religious group, and offers a special status recognized by other members of the group. On the other hand the influence of reference group is more powerful in the purchasing decisions for this type of product than when the product purchased is a necessity (DeMooij, 2004).

Taking into consideration the differences between pilgrims and tourists mentioned in the literature, we conclude that the pilgrimage supply is customized to satisfy the pilgrims' needs. The pilgrim is traveling from its faith in God (Dorneanu, 2012), so the most important thing is to have the possibility to reach the sacred place and to pray there. This is why, *the supply of domestic pilgrimages is characterized by a basic level of comfort*. Usually the accommodation facilities for pilgrims are represented by monasteries dormitories with 2 or more beds per room and / or guesthouses around the monasteries, the meals include breakfast or half board menus, while transportation is made by coach – facilities provided to satisfy the basic needs of pilgrims. The average daily budget of a pilgrim represents another argument for the basic level of comfort - in the case of the pilgrimages we have analyzed; the average basic daily budget of one pilgrim was 102 lei, representing 21 euros. Of course, if the pilgrim could afford, he/she will have the possibility to make other individual expenditures, such as: a lunch, souvenirs, fees etc.

Also as a consequence of collectivism tendency, individuals are looking for an informal atmosphere during the pilgrimage trip, which promotes the harmony inside the group. That's why they perceived the pilgrimage also as an opportunity to socialize with others, gain more social networks and to obtain more knowledge and information from the cultural or historical point of view. So, *the pilgrimages represent a way to interact with other people sharing the same values*. The way that the pilgrimages are organized oblige pilgrims to share resources – they have to share the accommodation, the transportation, the meal and sometimes even the missal. Due to economic and social developments, some persons tend to feel more loneliness than before, so they try through pilgrimages to interact with people feeling the same, to pray together, to obtain redemption (Bănică, 2014).

Beside the characteristics of pilgrimages supply determined by the Romanian pilgrims' behavior, we identified another important aspect: *the use of TIC in the promotion of pilgrimages supply is rising*. All the pilgrimage centers of the ROC or the travel agents who promote their own pilgrimages have a webpage where we can find at least some details about the pilgrimage. The social media tools are also used in promotion of pilgrimages – four pilgrimage centers of ROC having a Facebook page since 2012.

The Romanian Patriarchate publishes, every two weeks, an online newspaper dedicated entirely to pilgrimages – *Lumina pelerinului (The Light of*

Pilgrim). There, the interested persons may find the upcoming pilgrimages and a lot of details about them. Analyzing many issues of this newspaper, we observed that the space dedicated to the domestic pilgrimages is below 15% out of total, the rest being dedicated to the external pilgrimages. A similar situation we noticed analyzing the Facebook pages of ROC pilgrimage centers – most of the pilgrimages promoted there are the pilgrimages organized abroad. Bănică (Bănică, 2014) provides an explanation for this state of act, considering that the external pilgrimages may have in the view of church representatives more prestige and nobility than the domestic pilgrimages. From another point of view, we consider that the ROC is targeting a younger segment of potential pilgrims when they are using the TIC instruments to promote their pilgrimages. As we mentioned previously, there is a decreasing trend in the number of orthodox persons, so the church representatives may try to attract the young and middle age population through these instruments – they try to educate them and their children in order to raise their awareness to religion and to the spiritual part of their lives.

Conclusions

According to Hofstede's theory, the Romanian society is characterized by the collectivism tendency and high uncertainty avoidance, dimensions which influence the way the pilgrimage centers and travel agents develop their pilgrimage products. Pilgrims tend to choose for pilgrimage destinations with a strong spiritual sense for orthodox, but destinations recommended by somebody else (a friend, a relative) who visited that places previously. That is why the majority of the domestic pilgrimages we analyzed, no matter who was the organizer, had as destination the Prislop Monastery, the monasteries from Moldova, Bucovina, Maramureș, Vâlcea, Oltenia or Dobrogea.

The domestic pilgrimage supply is customized to the basic needs of pilgrims, providing them affordable transportation mean, shelter and meal in order to reach a spiritual / sacred destination and to fulfill their desire to reach spirituality. From this perspective, we observed that the pilgrimage supply has a low level of differentiation, both from the perspective of the services provided and from the perspective of the destinations chosen. Furthermore, most of the units selling the pilgrimages provide many details regarding the trip: the places visited, the accommodation and transportation facilities, the activities and off course financial and organizational issues. All these details are meant to reduce uncertainty and to create to the pilgrim a safer environment, adequate to achieve its spiritual objectives. Due to the same reasons, the length of pilgrimages is in most of the cases below three nights. The pilgrimage centers are aware of the importance of pilgrims' spiritual objectives, so they provide them a feasible alternative to organizing the trip by their own. In spite of that, the share of the persons going on a pilgrimage by their own is still high.

A significant difference between the pilgrimages organized by ROC and other pilgrimages has to be mentioned: the presence of a priest having the role of spiritual guiding. The priest has to guide the pilgrim to see the spiritual / religious meaning of the place they visit, has to discuss with pilgrims to educate them and help them to fulfil

their desires. In fact, through the presence and the role of priest, the ROC tries to make a distinction between religious travels and pilgrimages.

Due to collectivism dimension, the pilgrimages represent in the same time a way to socialize with people sharing the same values. Also, specific to this dimension is the idea of sharing resources, in our case pilgrims sharing the accommodation, the transportation and even the missal.

Another difference we have noticed between pilgrimages is the different approach to domestic – external pilgrimages. Using TIC instruments and social media, the ROC, through its pilgrimage centers, promotes intensively the external pilgrimages, while the domestic pilgrimages are barely mentioned. This is an innovative way to approach the pilgrims: in the case of adults and older people they use traditional tools (pilgrimage centers and recommendations of the priests), while in the case of young and some of the adults they use modern tools (social media, online newspaper etc.). We concluded that in this way ROC is trying to enhance direct relationship with young and middle age people in order to bring them closer to the church.

Beside their spiritual part, the pilgrimages bring together a large number of people, raising for local administration and public institutions important challenges. Suitable access to pilgrimage destination, large parking places, security and medical safety represent only few of the services that local administration has to provide in spite of limited budgetary financial resources. Perhaps in Romania we cannot talk of a large number of pilgrims as they appear in countries and cities with tradition in this respect, but specific to our country is the fact that these pilgrimages are held in very small communities, in rural areas, and thus positive and negative impact are more obvious. To address these aspects and identify the pilgrim needs during their journey, we intend to continue our research analyzing the demand for pilgrimages. Off course, at that moment will have the opportunity to improve and develop the results we obtained here. But more important, knowing both sides of the phenomenon (supply and demand), we will be able to make some recommendations for local authorities in order to guarantee a sustainable development of pilgrimages in our country.

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