

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN CROATIA

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Abstract:

Croatia has a rich sacral (tangible and intangible) heritage, which undoubtedly has great cultural value, and part of the religious heritage has been included in the World Heritage List of UNESCO. The fact is, however, that, except when it comes to top attractions, churches as tourist facilities, are poorly attended and do not get almost no direct tourism income.

In this paper, after the introductory explanations of basic terms related to religious tourism and pilgrimage, we explore the basic features of religious tourism in Croatia, both on tourist attractions, as well as on the tourist demand. It also presents the results of empirical research on the socio-demographic profile of the author, the role of religion in the life of pilgrims and the satisfaction of the visitors to the Shrine of Mary of Bistrice in 2013 among 50 pilgrims in Marija Bistrice. The main objective is to determine how the pilgrims perceived the tourism offer in religious tourism.

Keywords: religious tourism, pilgrimages, Marian shrines, visitors' satisfaction, motives to the Marian shrine.

Jel Classification: L83

INTRODUCTION

Quantitative data of tourism in Croatia (the number of tourist arrivals, overnight stays, tourism receipts, etc.) in recent years point to positive results as a result of significant efforts of all stakeholders in the tourism industry to improve the quality of tourism products (improving the quality of the accommodation and catering services, diversity content and experience, security, promotion of Croatian tourism in foreign markets, etc.). The fact is that the tourist product 'sun and sea' continues to attract the largest number of visitors and is a major motive for tourists' arrival in Croatia. However, in

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accordance with the resources of each region, developing of tourism products that provide to Croatian tourism attributes of year-round tourism and tourism that takes place in the whole area (not just in the coastal Croatia): nautical tourism, health tourism, cultural tourism, gastronomy and wine, business tourism, golf tourism, rural tourism, etc.

Although pilgrimages to Marian shrines in Croatia has a long tradition, Croatia did not valorise them in tourist way or in developing religious tourism in the past. This was due to the social and political situation on Croatian territory in the second half of the 20th century. Most authors investigate the specifics of the impact of religious tourism (Vukonic 1996; Collins-Kreiner et al. 2006; Goodwin 2000) agree that affirmation of the pilgrimage places begins only with the major visit of religious tourists. Within the Croatian tourist offer and demand, religious motives are updated at the beginning of the 21st century when reaffirmation of religion and spirituality encourage increasing rationalization, general insecurity, occurrence, diverse forms of crisis, etc. Travel affirmation of Marian shrines in the Republic of Croatia is in the very beginnings.

Religious tourism is at least empirically investigated segment of tourism in Croatia, and the information on tourism supply and demand is insufficient for high-quality design of the tourist product in religious tourism. This paper, therefore, examines socio-demographic profile of the pilgrims, the motives and visitor satisfaction in Marija Bistrica, as the most visited Marian shrine, in order to obtain the relevant data on the characteristics of the visitors, their needs and requirements.

DEFINITION OF PILGRIMAGE AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Defining and classifying terms related to religious tourism allows the promotion of clarity in communication and the means of establishing relationships between phenomena.

It is not surprising that such a complex and diverse human activities such as the pilgrimage is no generally accepted definition. However, the absence unanimously accepted consensus complicates not only the separation between non-pilgrimage from pilgrimage, but also implies the use of different classification criteria of pilgrimage and other forms of religious tourism.

For Sykes pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place as an act of saintly devotion (Sykes 1982, 776). Brandon involves in the pilgrimage three factors: sacred place, the attractiveness for individual or mass, specific goal or achievement of some spiritual or material benefit (Brandon 1970, 501). The term pilgrimage is used in the following three cases (Crim 1981, 569). First, as an 'internal pilgrimage', 'soul travel' throughout the life cycle, from the beginning of spiritual growth to maturity. Secondly, literally a pilgrimage to a holy place, as a form of faith itself. This trip can literally be called 'extroverted mysticism.' And finally, every trip to a local shrine is a pilgrimage to the extent that it operates on a scale of transformation or growth and experience of the sacred and the new community, which generally provides a pilgrimage. These definitions provide a conceptual meaning of the pilgrimage, but they lack the elements necessary to distinguish pilgrimage from other types of travel. Taking into account the vagueness of the above definition Stoddard defines pilgrimage as an event that is in relation to local travel by increasing the number of visitors to the holy places, as an act of religious devotion (Stoddard 2014). Believers follow their religious needs, or

religion labeled the act, and their goal is to visit the 'holy places' (Vukonic 1990, 80). Pilgrimage is defined as a journey to a faraway place with the intention of executing some religious tasks or seeking supernatural help (Catholic encyclopedia 2013). Pilgrimage to the forgiveness of sins, sometimes for punishment for crimes committed, and mostly due to the execution of a covenant. It is in their nature, most often, redemptive, or path to redemption, and is connected with renunciation and sacrifice. A pilgrim asks good, in fact, as a reward for carried effort (Rebic 1992, 393). Visitors to the holy sites are ranked from highly orthodox religious pilgrims, through 'traditional' pilgrims - tourists to secular tourists. Today's pilgrims can be represented on a scale from spiritual to secular and from tourists to pilgrims (Vijayanand 2012, 329). Pilgrimage routes throughout history were also roads of trade, socializing, meeting new countries and customs, as well as robberies. For the purposes of pilgrims were founded inns and restaurants, and pilgrims were granted with special protection on the road. Pilgrimage routes are often passed through a number of places of pilgrimage, offering the possibility to a pilgrim to visit more of these places. Thus, for example, a pilgrim on the way to Cologne could fit in at least six other places of pilgrimage: Salzburg, Ulm, Passau, Regensburg, Würzburg and Andernach (Budak 1991, 18). In recent history, a joint trip of believers are organized, often under the auspices of the Church itself, it is important gathering of the faithful, and the objective of the trip does not have to have a religious character. Although the itinerary of these trips includes a tour of sacred objects, and even other religions, as well as various other 'holy places' and objects, they have a tourist character. What makes them religious, it is the obligation to fulfill certain religious practices and rituals throughout the day. A common theme of religious travel is a visit to religious events.

Meeting the needs of the faithful on pilgrimage, and the destination where the shrine is located, has led to the development of special forms of tourism - religious tourism. The interweaving of religion and tourism is clearly visible deeper insight into the historical context of tourism, especially if religion is viewed as one of the oldest motives of human migration and the need to travel. Religious tourism is directed to visit important religious sites. The main motivation for travel is to meet the spiritual, and religious needs of people involved in this kind of tourist travel. But the motivation for travel may be exploring the culture of other nations, or other religion, exploring sacred objects, etc. The most common forms of religious tourism are (Vukonic 1990, 100): pilgrimage, continuous group and individual visits to religious shrines,

- as a mass gathering on the occasion of major religious dates and anniversaries,
- as a tour of tourist itineraries and regardless of the time in which it appears.

The most common form of religious tourism are pilgrimages. Some religions include pilgrimages in their practice, as is the case with the Buddhists, Catholics and Orthodox, Hindu, Islam and Shintoist. In other religions, however, this practice does not exist, although their followers visit places that mark the history of the religious group to which they belong.

MAIN FEATURES OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN CROATIA

Although one of the oldest forms of tourism, religious tourism in Croatia did not develop in the past. The reason for that may be required in the tourism policy which is focused on the development of mass tourism with the basic product 'sun and sea'

oriented only on coastal areas, but also the political and social situation and shaping the culture in which marginalizes all that is spiritual and secular.

After War greater attention is paid to the tourism value of sacred objects and placing Marian shrines in the function of tourism, especially the shrine of Marija Bistrica.

Resources in religious tourism

Croatia has a rich sacral (tangible and intangible) heritage, which has great cultural value, and is part of the religious heritage has been included in the World Heritage List of UNESCO, which is why the lists of valuable tourism resources regularly cite numerous churches as potential tourist attractions (Euphra's basilica, Jacob's Cathedral, Cathedral of St. Marko in Zagreb, etc.). The fact is, however, that, except when it comes to top attractions, churches as tourist facilities, poorly attended and not get almost no direct tourism income. Sacred objects are generally only supplement to the basic tourist attractions. On the Croatian territory is a larger number of shrines which are the basic resource for the development of religious tourism, and Marian shrines (22 of them) are the motif for traveling to a larger number of pilgrims during religious feast of the Assumption. Known shrines of Our Lady in the Republic of Croatia are: Shrine of Mary in Marija Bistrica, shrine of Our Lady on Trsat, Shrine of Our Lady of the Stone Gate in Zagreb, Shrine of Our Lady of Tears in Pleternica, Shrine of Our Lady of Sinj in Sinj, Shrine of Our Lady of Krasno in Krasno and Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation in Aljmas.

Shrine of Mary in Marija Bistrica is for centuries central to the religious life of the Croatian people. The same meaning as Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal in the life of believers has Marija Bistrica in Croatia. Pilgrimage to the shrine, dating from the 1684, and in 1715 was declared a national shrine when the Croatian Parliament raised a large votive altar. With this the Croatian Parliament approved the devotion of the Croatian people to the Mother of God of Bistrica. During the year, is organized around fifty pilgrimages starting from White Sunday (early April) to Thanksgiving (late October).

Sanctuary of the Mother of God in Trsat is seven century old place with particular religious and cultural events as well as gatherings. It is the oldest Croatian sanctuary with continuous worship of the Mother of God on pilgrimage gathering. Its history is based on the legend of the transfer of the Nazareth home from the Holy Land 10th May 1291 on Trsat Plains, and from there the 10th December 1294 in Loreto, Italy. At the site of the Nazareth home, Frankopan dukes from the island Krk built the church, which became the oldest Frankopan's endowment and pilgrimage destination.

Shrine of Our Lady of the Stone Gate in Zagreb dates from the 173. In a large fire that broke out on the 31st Maya 1731 the image of Our Lady, which previously stood above the gate of the city, remained intact, and only the frame burnt. Since the image miraculously held in the conflagration that devastated Gradec, it was credited to her special power. Then, under the vault of the Stone Gate, in gratitude, was built a chapel, which still exists in the hollow passage of the Stone Gate and preserves the image of the Virgin Mary, and since then, it became the largest sanctuary in Zagreb.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary began in Pleternica in 1955 with the maintenance of the Novena to Our Lady of Tears, in memory of the miraculous event

when the relief of Immaculate Heart of Mary made of gypsum, wept with human tears during 29th, 30th, 31st August and 1st September 1953 in Siracusa in Sicily. Over the years gathered a growing number of pilgrims. Pleternica is declared diocesan on 31st August 2005, and thus the new Croatian Marian sanctuary.

Shrine of Our Lady of Sinj in Sinj dating back in 1715, after the victory over the Turks, people of Sinj attributed to the miraculous intercession of Our Lady of Sinj. Image of Our Lady of Sinj is painted by an unknown Venetian painter of the 16th century. In gratitude for the help it is forged a golden crown and a cross with which the image of Our Lady was crowned, located in the church of St. Mary in Sinj since 1721.

Shrine of Our Lady of Krasno in Krasno is based on the legend of the Mother of God from Krasno that dates from 1219. According to the legend, the shepherds found the miraculous flower in which was the image of the Mother of God. Pastors chipped this flower and bring it into field of Krasno, where has been, since ancient times, a chapel. Transferred flower is gone, and the shepherds found it again in the same place as the first time. This miracle was repeated several times, and the population realized the desire of Our Lady, and they built a chapel in the woods where the flower appeared, and above the place of the appearance of a flower they built the altar.

Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation in Aljmas is dating back in 1704 and is one of the oldest and most visited Marian shrines in Djakovac and Osijek Archdiocese. In the war, shrine is completely destroyed, and with the return of the population it was rebuilt and Our Lady of Consolation reunites pilgrims again.

Religious contents, however, do not follow adequate tourist facilities that would enable the reception and a large number of pilgrims and that would be in function to satisfy their basic travel needs. For example, Marija Bistrica available only with 154 beds in hotels (66) and households. If one keeps in mind that this shrine during the year visit more than 50 million visitors in pilgrimage, it is clear that the inadequacy of the capacity is limiting factor in the development of religious tourism in Marija Bistrica. Catering facilities also can not meet the needs of an increasing number of visitors in Marija Bistrica. There are missing the events which would attract more visitors outside of pilgrimage throughout the year, and entrepreneurial initiative in the commercialization of religious content. Positive changes are evident in the growing number of souvenir makers (local souvenirs decorated with traditional motifs, traditional wooden toys, new souvenirs from religious motives, etc.).

Despite these shortcomings in the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia, until 2010 to the religious tourism, especially as the relevant product of cultural tourism, is given the dominant role of the tourism product. In Kvarner and Central Croatia, it would be a secondary tourism product, and in other regions the tertiary. In doing so, it highlights the need for investment in a range of innovative products, religious sites and a network of pilgrimage routes and the introduction of a new generation of products that enable creative expression and interaction of visitors with the local ambience in order to open up access to new consumer segments.

Tourist demand

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in religious tourism annually are engaged about 300 million passengers (pilgrims and visitors of sacred objects). In 27% of tourist arrivals, which were realized in the 2012 in the world are involved even those

arrivals which encourage religious reasons and pilgrimages (Tourism Highlights 2014, 4). Despite the long history of the pilgrimage on Croatian territory, researches show a completely different trend than on the global level. Marian shrines of Marija Bistrica, Trsat and Aljmas, annually visit about 1.3 million visitors. Despite great visit (about eight hundred thousand visitors a year), Marija Bistrica realizes only 6,052 tourist arrivals and tourist nights 9545 (in 2012). Researches of the Institute of Tourism about the motives of arrival of foreign tourists in Croatia show that the religious motive of trips is in the last place. Only 0.3% of foreign tourists in the 2010 occurred in Croatia motivated by religious considerations (Tomas 2010, 41). Although the oldest Croatian sanctuary - Sanctuary of the Mother of God is located in the Primorje-Gorski Kotar county, religious reasons as the motive of visitors' arrivals were absent in this county (Table 1 – Tomas 2010, 159)

Table 1. The motives of tourists' arrivals in the Croatian coastal counties, 2010

Rang	Motives	County of Istria	Primorsko-goranska county	Ličko-senjska county	Zadar county	Splitsko-dalmatinska county	Dubrovačko-neretvanska county
1.	Passive rest, relaxation	74,1	78,6	66,3	70,4	76,6	71,9
2.	Fun	52,9	54,4	43,3	40,3	29,8	32,6
3.	New experiences and adventures	19,1	36,3	21,5	26,7	21,2	32,6
4.	Enjoying food and drink, gastronomy	25,9	15,2	20,0	30,4	17,1	19,7
5.	Introducing natural beauty	22,6	9,9	24,0	16,3	22,8	35,0
6.	Visiting relatives and friends	5,2	8,5	12,8	26,8	4,8	5,9
7.	Playing sports and recreation	9,0	5,6	15,1	9,4	11,2	5,8
8.	Cultural attractions and events	6,6	3,2	5,8	6,1	9,5	15,5
9.	Medical reasons	3,2	4,3	8,5	9,5	5,1	4,1
10.	Diving	2,1	1,2	7,4	10,8	3,5	4,4
11.	Other motives	5,4	-	2,6	3,7	3,2	3,8
12.	Purchase	2,5	1,2	2,3	2,9	2,8	3,4
13.	Wellness	0,8	3,8	-	2,7	0,9	1,2
14.	Business commitments	0,6	0,2	0,6	0,8	1,2	1,9
15.	Religious reasons	0,4	-	0,9	0,2	0,4	0,3

Survey conducted by a random sample of 50 visitors in July and August 2013 in Marija Bistrica came to the knowledge of sociodemographical characteristics of pilgrims to the shrine of Mary of Bistrica. As the country of origin is usually mentioned Croatia (91.4), followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina (4.3), Slovenia (2.9) and Kosovo (1.4). The share of female respondents makes 64.3%, while the proportion of male respondents is 35.7%. The most common share of respondents makes age group of 20-29 years (47.1%), followed by the age group under 29 years (17.1%), from 40-49 years 14.3%, 30-39 years 12.9% and 50 years and over (8.6%). Regarding education, the majority of respondents have a college or higher education (52.9%), followed by those with secondary education (41.4%) and respondents with primary education (5.7%). With regard to employment, the majority is employed or in education (divided by

40%), 7.1% of them are unemployed or retired, 4.3% of the monks, and 1.4% are housewives. Most of the respondents have an income of 1000-5000 kunas (40%), followed by those with incomes below 1,000 kunas and those with incomes of 5,000 up to 10,000 kunas, with the same share of 21.4%, and respondents with no income (17.1%).

By analyzing the social and demographic profile of the respondents, it can be concluded that the visitors to the shrine of Our Lady in Bistrica are of Croatian origin, younger age, higher and higher levels of education, employment or training, with an average income.

The largest number of respondents in spending between 50 and 100 euros, 48.6%, followed by those with consumption of up to 50 euros (41.4%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Consumption of visitors to the shrine of Our Mary in Bistrica in destination

Consumption	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
1) less than 50 Euros	29	41,4
2) from 50 to 100 Euros	34	48,6
3) from 100 to 150 Euros	4	5,7
4) more than 150 Euros	3	1,3

The role and significance of religion in the lives of the respondents observed through four questions ('religion', 'frequency of going to Mass,' 'self-assessment of religiousness' and 'the meaning of Mary in the life of pilgrims').

Respondents were predominantly Roman Catholic religion, 98.6% of them. Most respondents adhered to the instruction of the Catholic Church, according to which the Holy Mass should be attended at least once a week. Thus, 65.7% of respondents go to Mass once a week or more often, they are 18.6% who go to the Mass two to three times a month, 14.3% go to Mass several times a year, and 1.4% in special occasions. With regard to the religiosity of the respondents, the majority of respondents believe that they are deeply religious, 50% of them, while 41.4% believe that they are only religious. Low religiosity is represented in 14.3% of respondents, while 1.4% of them can not describe their religiosity. The meaning of Mary in the life of the pilgrims is very important for most respondents, 68.6%, it is important for 17.1% of respondents, while unimportant for 2.9% of respondents.

Based on this, we come to the realization that the visitors of the shrine of Our Lady in Bistrica are majority Roman Catholic faith, most of them went to Mass once a week or more often, deeply religious, and a very important meaning to them represents Mary.

The main motive for coming to the shrine of Our Lady in Bistrica is 'spiritual renewal, for 64.3% of respondents, followed by' seeking God ', 52.9% of respondents and' longing for the tranquility of the soul ', 40% of respondents.

'Education' and 'visit within the tourist itineraries' are represented only in 2.9 and 1.4% of respondents (Figure 1).

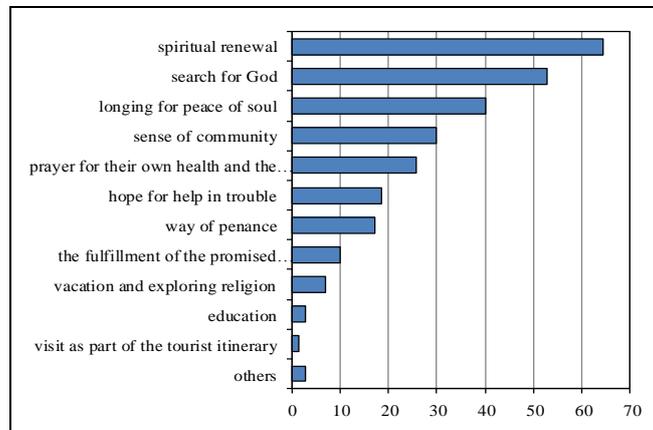


Figure 1. The motives of the pilgrimage to the Shrine of Mary in Bistrica, in % * possibility of multiple answers

Respondents evaluated their satisfaction of elements of the tourism offer in destination with the scores on a scale of 5 - the highest rating (very satisfied) to 1 - the lowest score (very dissatisfied). Respondents rated the best following: 'offer of religious souvenirs' (average score 4.63), 'water supply' (4,23), 'medical services' (4,10), 'cultural programs' (4,9) and 'signaling and assistance' (4,04). The worst evaluated: 'transportation in destination' (3,50), 'accommodation in destination' (3,57), and 'communication facilities' (3,79). Results from the analysis of the average scores are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Pilgrims' satisfaction of elements of tourism in Marija Bistrica

Consumption	Arithmetic mean
1. reception in destination	3,87
2. the availability of information	3,86
3. signaling and help	4,04
4. transport in destination	3,50
5. accommodation in destination	3,57
6. offer food and beverages	3,57
7. offer religious souvenirs	4,63
8. medical services	4,10
9. banking services	3,57
10. communication facilities	3,79
11. safety in destination	4,06
12. price / fees	3,64
13. cultural programs	4,09
14. water supply	4,23

Means score of guest satisfaction elements of the tourist offer of Marija Bistrica ranged from 3.5 to 4.63, which is closest to the code mark 4 or 5, so it can be concluded that the visitors were somewhat satisfied with elements of tourism in Marija Bistrica.

CONCLUSION

About religious tourism as a developed form of selective tourism in Croatia we can not speak. This is also corroborated by the low level of tourist valorisation of religious buildings and shrines (the number of foreign visits, tourist arrivals and overnight stays in revenues from religious tourism, etc.). In the religious tourism in Croatia are involved mainly domestic tourists, while for foreign tourists the religious motive represents the motive of arrival in some destination is in last place. Results of research by a sample of 50 patients at the Shrine of Mary show that visitors are mostly of Croatian origin, younger age, with the higher levels of education, employed or in the process of education, with an average income. Furthermore, visitors are mostly of Roman Catholic faith, and they go to Mass once a week or more often, deeply religious, very important to them is the meaning of Mary and they come to the sanctuary mainly motivated by 'spiritual renewal' and 'seeking God.' Consumption of visitors ranges mostly between 50 and 100 euros, and the destination are largely satisfied with the infrastructure elements, and thus fewer tourist attractions.

The development of religious tourism follows a series of problems: Croatia is not recognized in the international tourism market as a destination for religious tourism, coordination of stakeholders (religious communities, partners of tourism, tourist boards) is not at a satisfactory level and tourist destinations are not adapted to the needs and demands of religious travelers. In accordance with the Strategy of development of Croatian tourism investment in the range of innovative products, religious sites and a network of pilgrimage routes and the introduction of a new generation of products that enable creative expression and interaction of visitors with the local ambience precondition of its positioning on the international tourist market.

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