

THE RELIGIOUS - CULTURAL TOURISM PROFILE OF THE COUNTIES IN THE REGION OF OLTENIA - ROMANIA

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Abstract: *Each village in Romania has a number of features that can be points of analysis and benchmarking in terms of local touristic profiling. Some of them, by their age can be an interesting case study in terms of cultural values they have. While selecting the types monument could establish touristic profile of the geographical area concerned. Each county has a great tourist offer, materialized in cultural and religious monuments- dating back several centuries. It is necessary to differentiate between religious monuments representing the material remains of different periods, thereby identifying thus not only the age, but also the architectural style of the cult, the density and ratio of the religious constructions, the enrollment in current artistic painting influences received regarding their construction and architecture. Making differences on points of structure enables the classification of each type that can be developed here, according to CTU – The Indicator of their Usage on Cultural and Tourism purposes, RCTs - the Relevance of Cultural and Tourism value, and ICT – indicator ranking Cultural and Tourism value. The findings allow highlighting cultural differences and the religious touristic profile depending on the type and number of monuments, of their age and importance in terms of tourism. According to this classification there may be made trails or travel profile type and age of each geographical area.*

Keywords: *cultural tourism, cultural monuments, art, culture, tourism, spirituality*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism represents and covers today many geographical areas, being one of the important forms of tourism, for both local people and tourists or interested persons. Material traces are those that favour the development of cultural tourism and allow determining the periods of intense housing and economic development of the population in the geographical area analyzed. Cultural and religious objectives constitute nowadays great attractions. This situation has always been present, only the display of the population's actions has been different (Teodorescu et al, 2004). The entire population during the communist period was continuously watching its spiritual alienation and distancing from the religious activities and interest. After the fall of communism, they have expressed strong attraction freely and without ever

having any restraint in this regard. Freedom of spiritual expression is strong and un- limited. What was really interesting is that throughout the communist period, religious activity was not interrupted. There were found ways of expression through cultural or tourist activities, that were designed to hold and transmit the message (Lafuente, 2016). Cultural and religious tourism and the historical one have got the quality of being presented to tourists in order to enrich their culture, with new, unknown or some enrichment of their knowledge (Yakunin, et al., 2016; Peptenatu et al., 2012). The emotions arisen during the participation in religious tourism consumption, do not appear to be influenced by external factors. Faith can increase positive emotions (Quezado et al., 2016; Pintilii et al., 2011).

Regardless of the era when there was built the place of worship and what times of the past it came through, today there is an outstanding touristic attraction towards such type of constructions. Art movement is what is left uncovered, along with the architectural influences and other material traces dominating the whole assembly, that has been transformed in an object that is intended to be visited. The existing religious monuments included in the UNESCO list, are causing increasingly more curiosity and desire for knowledge of their peculiarities. But uncontrolled tourism can bring damage to the image of the religious importance, of the authentic message that is meant to be transmitted, by the moral contamination, the loss of value and cultural authenticity. (Bloch, 2017). Tourism activity is not easy to implement in a geographic area. Research into cultural and religious tourism field is a descriptive and quantitative research (Quezado et al., 2016). The discovery of local symbols can provide some advantages, especially where the economic activity is poorly represented. Perhaps this way, such a symbol – target could help revitalize local heritage and local economic regeneration (Coit, 2016; Bond et al., 2015). Alvarado-Sizzo very well captures the idea of secondary touristic destinations, where areas with special cultural offerings may become destinations limited to one- day' visits.

METHODOLOGY

Regarding the method to be performed within this study, there have been followed systematically different stages:

1. The basic idea was to achieve connection between the list of monuments of the Ministry of Culture in Romania, by aiming at two directions:
 - a. To what extent these monuments can support a touristic activity?
 - b. The analysis during longer time periods, of the presence of cultural and religious monuments within the geographical space, is made in order to determine the possible length or dating of the cultural and religious monuments of the five counties of Oltenia region.

2. In collecting and analyzing the data, there was started from the idea of involving the list of the existing monuments, as it has been made by the Ministry of Culture, In order to get a better picture of what can be realized in terms of cultural tourism today, there has been analyzed on the ground, each object listed as monument, to clearly define its physical condition and own accessibility. All these were made in order to answer, largely, to point a.

3. Setting assessment indicators:

a. CTU - indicator of cultural and touristic usage of the cultural and touristic monument;

This may range from 1 to 5 by:

- accessibility (presence of the access roads with different degree of modernization)
- originality (if there have been kept particularities within the period of their construction)
- degree of fitting/ facilities (offering visitors the atmosphere of utmost importance or specific to the economic development, the objective presentation artistically speaking, etc.)
- influence of natural factors / other factors (peculiarities of geographical description/ relief forms, arrangements of watercourses, lakes, environmental organization of the elements of vegetation, etc.)
- visitors

b. Rct - Relevance of cultural and touristic value of a geographical area or of a city.

Cultural relevance, as well as cultural – touristic importance, thus encompass five size classes, which in turn are influenced by them, thus reaching a maximum size of 25 and a minimum value of 1.

In the case of the places of worship, there have participated in the evaluation indicators, the hotel- like arrangements or housing and accommodation structures, recreational areas and creative spaces, their inclusion in UNESCO, attending special events over time, their outstanding architecture and/ or painting special and so on.

The ranking of the five counties in the province of Oltenia highlights the role it could play in tourism development, especially in cultural and religious tourism. It is very important to know when were the major periods in which there were raised these churches, which artistic influences may have been present, which economic situation was typical of this period, which were the social events of that period and to what extent they have imprinted their mark upon.

RESULTS

Making maps with the location of cultural and religious monuments of Oltenia, considering the time or stage at which they were built, already creates an interesting picture (Figure 1), at which there may be added the relationship between the evolution of the religious constructions in each county of Oltenia and the interest of tourists to visit them (Figure 2).

METHODOLOGY

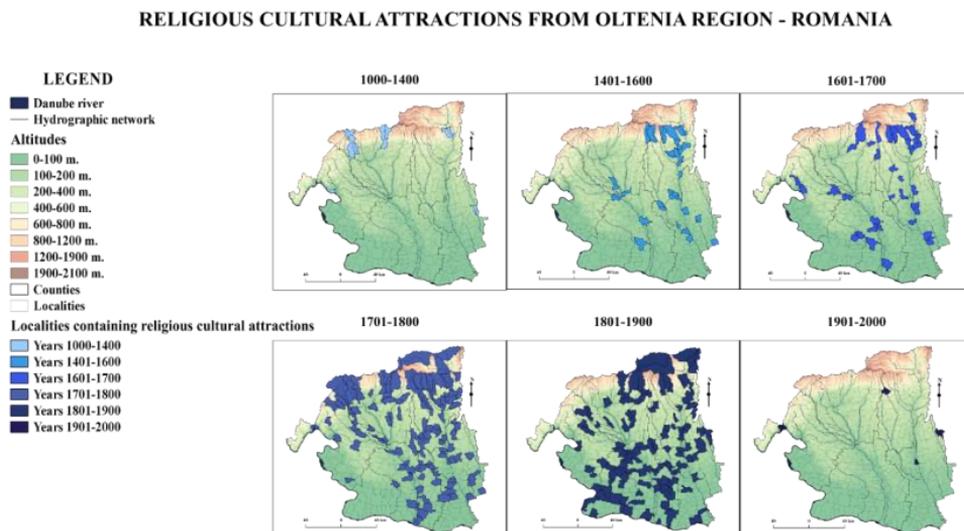


Figure 1. Location of cultural-religious landmarks in Oltenia

The oldest cultural-religious monuments are found in the northern counties of Gorj and Valcea, the Carpathian and mountain areas being favorite for the period of the eleventh century and the beginning of the fifteenth century. Over the next three centuries (situation presented in the two enclosed maps), the sub-Carpathian area of Valcea is the one that gives the attractive space for the construction of churches, but that also appear in the area of low altitude, at the limit between the hilly area of the plains of Olt and Dolj.

There outstands the period of the eighteenth century up to the early nineteenth century, when the number of the cultural and religious monuments dating from this period is quite high, with spreading throughout the area of Olt, regardless of landforms and altitude. But there is an area where the density is much lower on what monuments are concerned, namely the southwestern area of Dolj county, but it is noticeable in the next century, when the whole area is covered by the presence of these monuments. A reverse situation is noticed in the northwestern county of Gorj, whose presence is noticed in the eighteenth century, up to the early nineteenth century, while in the nineteenth century there cannot be found any single monument dating since that period that respective area.

The twentieth century is underrepresented, but monuments dating from this period come to complete the geographical area and especially bring a novelty in terms of architecture and painting.

Evolution of the number of registered churches as monuments / share differentiated people interested in visiting their

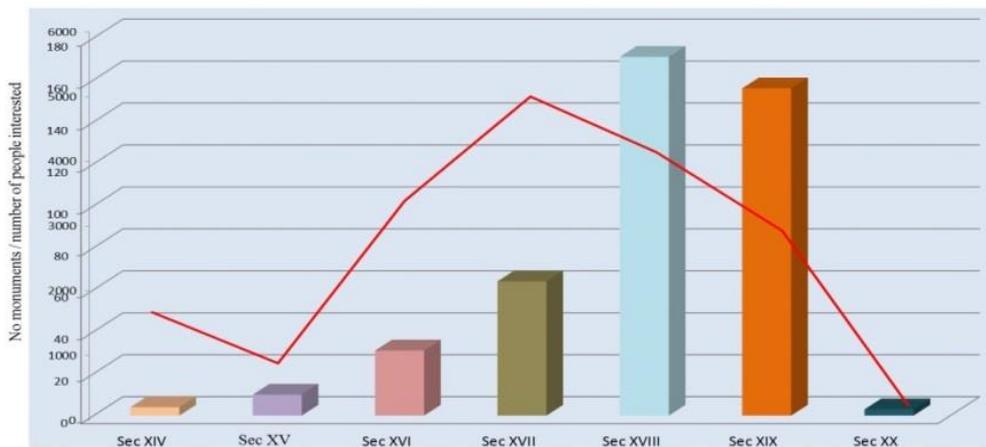


Figure 2. Evolution of the number of religious monuments/ Persons interested in visiting them.

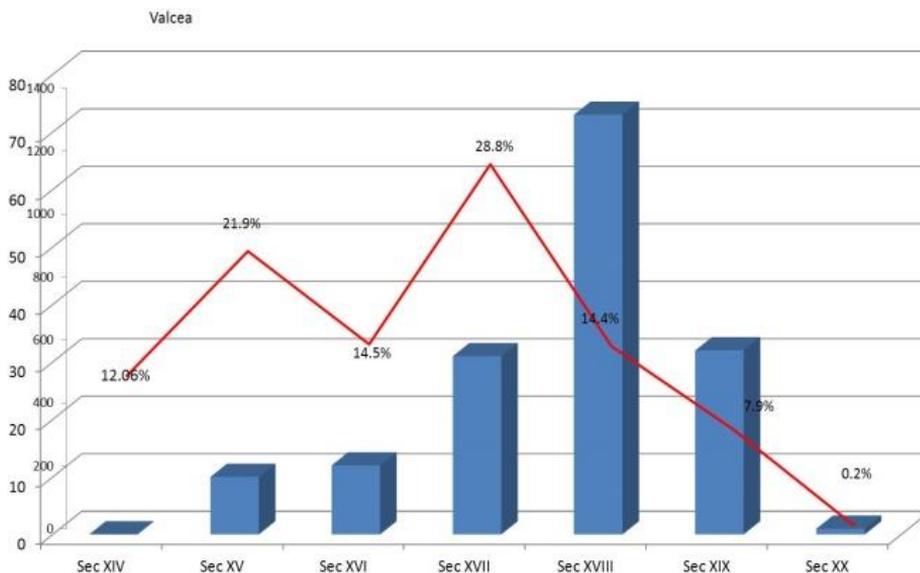


Fig. 3. Evolution of the number of religious monuments / Persons interested in visiting these monuments in the county of Valcea

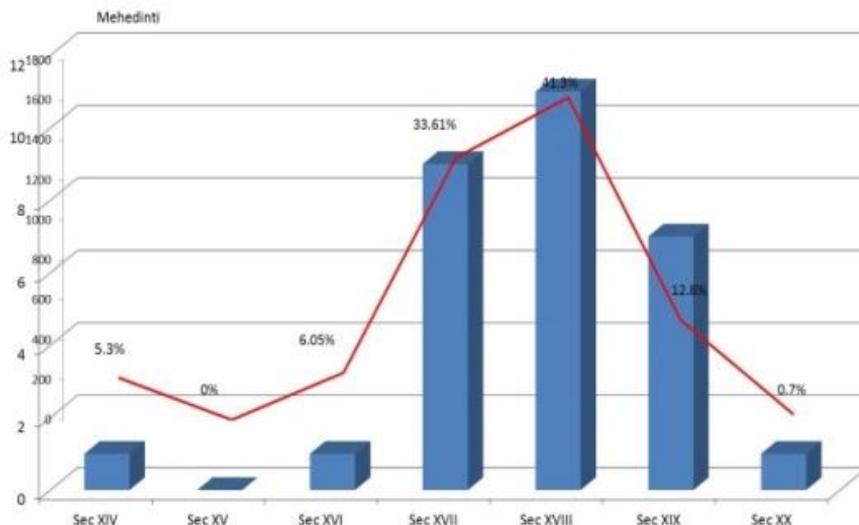


Fig. 4 Evolution of the number of religious monuments / Persons interested in visiting these monuments in the county of Mehedinți

There are explanations for each period, explanations that can be found in the economic and socio-political context of each period. The eighteenth century is one that stands across the area of Olt and beyond. Culture in all its forms is one that stands out, especially in the construction of the religious monuments. They are the ones that can pass today evidence of culture progress expressed in secular architecture and painting, this period extending along time until the middle of the eighteenth century.

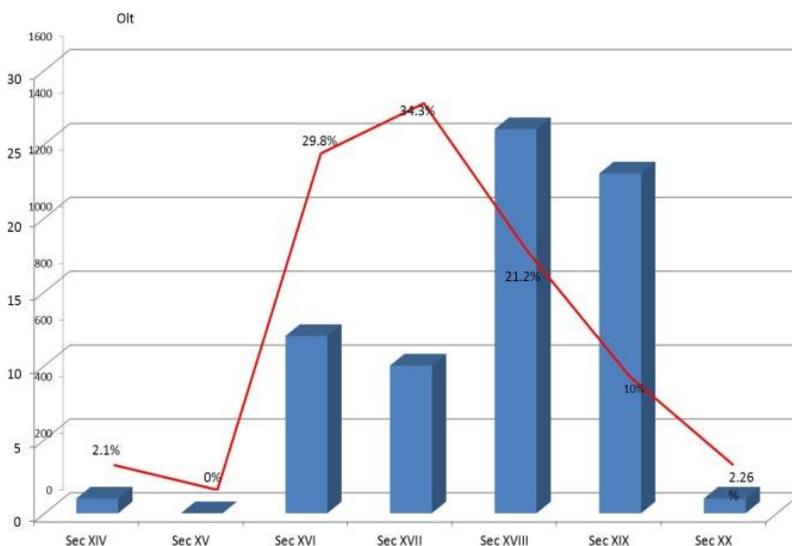


Fig. 5 Evolution of the number of religious monuments / Persons interested in visiting these monuments in the county of Olt

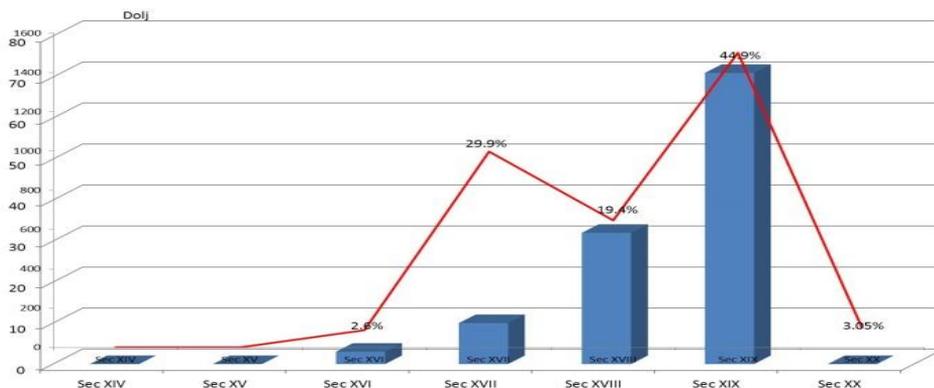


Fig. 6. Evolution of the number of religious monuments / Persons interested in visiting these monuments in the county of Dolj.

Each county in Oltenia is the transmitter of the information related to the culture and values that led to its evolution. If for some counties they were favorable for the erection of church and monastery constructions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, others having started being erased even earlier, as noticeable within the county of Olt, where there are many enough, in the sixteenth century (Fig . 5). Today they are the source of attraction and the cultural spirituality resource.

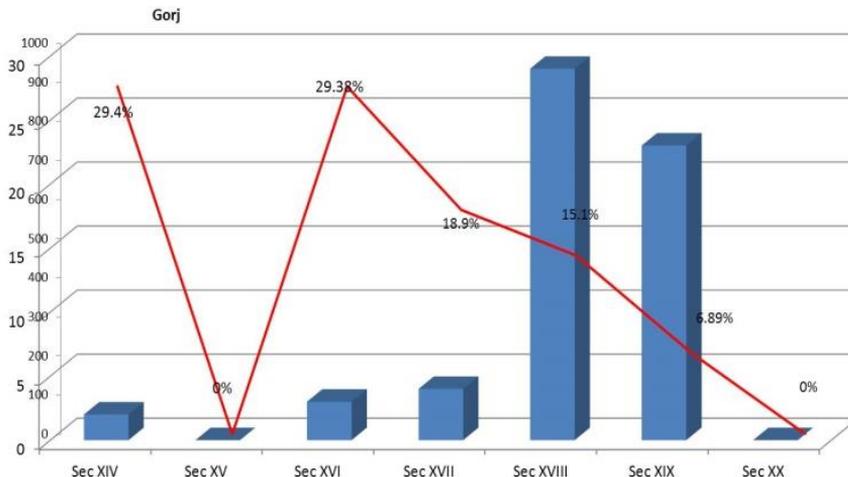


Fig. 7. Evolution of the number of religious monuments / Persons interested in visiting these monuments in the county of Gorj.

Each county has its peculiarities in terms of raising religious constructions. The great attractiveness shows, despite representation on the map, cultural and religious monuments lifted during the 16th and 17th centuries (Fig. 3 Fig. 4 Fig. 5 and Fig 6). To these there are also added monuments dating 14th century in Gorj county (fig.7).

Tourists' attraction for certain religious monuments is determined by a series of factors (Valenta et al., 2016; Semkovics, 2006; Teodorescu et al., 2013). The most common are environmental and spiritual factors. The tradition of religious tourism is firmly established in all religions. The most notable visual manifestation (Veselovsky, 2016; Pereira, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS

The relation between the concept of tourism and population movements in religious purpose, motivated by their religious beliefs, allows us to reflect on a segment of the tourist market rather little approached in the research, in Human Geography: religious tourism.

Analyzing it in a permanent correlation between the age of religious monuments and the number of people interested in knowing them (no matter if they do it on religious or tourist-cultural purpose), creates a complete picture of the need for highlighting the cultural and tourist values existing in a geographic area.

Watching the evolution of the number of persons interested in visiting these monuments (some of which are now only ruins – the Ruins of Vodita Monastery, Mehedinti county), shows the need of arrangement of the visiting possibilities, in touristic respect (Aidarov, 2016; Komurcu et al., 2016; Teodorescu et al., 2016). It requires implementation of projects in this regard, which could outcome benefit two-ways, on the one hand- to maintain these monuments at certain standards and to stop their deterioration, and on the other hand- to wax a framework favorable to sustainable tourism with beneficial effects, economically speaking, for the local population, whose incomes are on average rather low.

Tourism development, as in fact the development of any economic activity, could create new economic opportunities, as for instance creating jobs for the local people, and, why not, stopping labor people's migration (Carboni, 2016 Fourie et al. , 2015; Alodadi et al., 2015).

There could become interesting the discovery of the cultural values offered by the cultural and religious monuments, which already have a high degree of degradation, through museums (Cerezales, 2014 Teodorescu et al., 2016), or by providing space conservation and information for the tourists and the people interested in, at the very place they are available.

The need for knowledge of the cultural values, of the local culture expressed through the architectural style, by the existing artistic movement in painting, could be an inexhaustible and efficient source in the development of individual personality that could be implemented by school or educational tourism. Such values should not be neglected. They express the evolution of local culture for centuries and it is very easy to follow this evolution, from the oldest to the newest ones. You can see the differences and similarities followed in constructions, the materials used, positioning in relation to the steps of

altitude and hydrographic network, local influences, the connection to the environment expressed pictures, the influences coming from local artisans or artists brought by the founders from other geographic regions and, why not, concept and volumetric changes. However we are provided all these data by the existing monuments in the entire space under analysis. Enriching or consolidating knowledge remain to be handy to those interested in this regard.

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