

CLUJ-NAPOCA BABES-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

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**RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN THE
NORTH OF SOUTH MUNTENIA
DEVELOPMENT REGION**

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	5
CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS	7
1.1. Theoretical basis.....	7
1.1.1. <i>The tourism – an „industry” with polyvalent, sacred and profane raw materials.....</i>	7
1.1.2. <i>The concept of religious tourism. Appearance and significance</i>	8
1.1.3. <i>Religious tourism– classification.....</i>	10
1.1.4. <i>Religious tourism– a sustainable activity?</i>	13
1.2. Methodology	13
CHAPTER 2. THE RELIGIOUS TOURISM POTENTIAL OF THE NORTHERN PART OF THE SOTH MUNTENIA DEVELOPMENT REGION	179
2.1. Geographical location of the region and its tourist impact	19
2.2. The structure of the religious tourism potential	19
2.2.1. <i>The religious organization of the studied space entity.....</i>	20
2.2.2. <i>Worship and sepulchral edifices</i>	21
2.2.2.1. <i>Cathedrals.....</i>	21
2.2.2.2. <i>Monasteries</i>	<i>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</i>
2.2.2.3. <i>Churces.....</i>	<i>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</i>
2.2.2.4. <i>Roadside crucifixes and crosses of stone</i>	24
2.2.2.5. <i>Religious edifices belonging to other religions.....</i>	25
2.2.2.6. <i>Mausoleums, cemeteries (necropolis), chapels, tumuli.....</i>	26
2.2.3. <i>Sacred sites and places</i>	<i>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</i>
2.2.3.1. <i>Miraculous icons.....</i>	<i>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</i>
2.2.3.2. <i>Places of power and healing</i>	<i>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</i>
2.2.3.3. <i>Relics in places of religious worship.....</i>	28
2.2.4. <i>Religious manifestations with attractive features . Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</i>	
2.2.4.1. <i>Pilgrimage.....</i>	29
2.2.4.2. <i>Devotion Days</i>	<i>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</i>
2.2.4.3. <i>Sanctification (consecration) or resanctification of a church</i>	32
2.3. Assessing the attractive religious potential	32
CHAPTER 3. THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM.....	33
3.1. Ways of acces	33
3.1.1 <i>Road access ways.....</i>	33
3.1.2 <i>The railways transport.....</i>	34
3.2. Tourist accommodation infrastructure.....	35
3.2.1. <i>The general tourist accommodation base.....</i>	35
3.2.2. <i>The specific accommodation base</i>	37
3.3. Promotion and practice facilities	37
3.3.1. <i>Ecclesiastical museums.....</i>	38
CHAPTER 4. TOURIST TRAFFIC IN SACRED SPACES AND PLACES	39
4.1. Regional touristic traffic	39
4.2. Seasonality of touristic traffic	40
4.2.1. <i>Monthly flows</i>	40
4.2.2. <i>Multiannual flows (2006-2016)</i>	41
4.3. Touristic traffic of worship edifices. Case studies	42
4.3.1. <i>Nucet Monastery.....</i>	42
CHAPTER 5. OPTIMIZATION SOLUTIONS AND MEASURES OF THE RELIGIOUS ATTRACTIVE OFFER IN NORTH MUNTENIA	47
5.1. Broadening and diversifying the attractive offer	47
5.2. Modernising the access routes.....	51
5.3. Accommodation base diversification and standardization	52

5.4. A model of spatial development for the studied area	51
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY	57

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS

1.1 Theoretical basis

Any rigorous and scientific approach must be based on a solid theoretical research that is adequate to the specific area and the intended purpose of the thesis. This approach requires, right from the start, a clear unveiling of the paradigms, theories and concepts that were applied, a peremptory delimitation of the subject together with the knowledge that we gain while researching the matter at hand. We can expect to reach a stage in which our efforts can be rewarded only through thorough research on the fine line between the knowing and the unknowing, whilst trying to better define and understand the first rather than the latter.

Regarding the theme under discussion, the religious tourism in a given geographical area of the national space, the theoretical matrix of the introspections and interpretative sweepings is moving within the area of manifestation of three fundamental aspects that can alone constitute a solid ground for the arguments, visions and practical solutions formulated for the subject at hand. These primordial targets of the analysis aim to underline such aspects as:

- The tourism, an “industry” with polyvalent, sacred and profane raw materials;
- The concept of religious tourism. Appearance and significance;
- The religious tourism, taxonomical classification;
- The religious tourism – a sustainable activity?

1.1.1 The tourism - an “industry” with polyvalent, sacred and profane raw materials

The focus of our scientific pursuits, specific to any thesis, on certain aspects and processes from the domain of the Tourism Geography, clearly requires to investigate the general context of tourism phenomenon. This is due to the fact that the whole arsenal of concepts and methodology is the same while the optimization solutions for some dysfunctions are relatively similar.

Amongst the various domains of geographical science, including here also the ones that come up from the interference of geography with other sciences, the touristic domain is widely spread and is the most acknowledged, confirming even nowadays, at the beginning of the 3rd millennium, what Whelan (1991) stated a quarter of a century ago, namely the fact that the tourism has become a top “industry” of the world with an extremely fast development, both at territorial and social level.

In such a flowering context of development, it is natural that the scientific pursuits focused on the whole tourism phenomenon are assiduous, while their results are materialized in different theories, concepts, notions and new methodologies, as prodigious as the pursuits.

We need to emphasize, right from the start, the fact that this “raw material” which initiates and puts into motion the tourism industry is totally different from the one used in metallurgy, chemical or building materials industries, where there are specific ores that can be traced and quantitatively and qualitatively evaluated. As Cocean (1996) states, the tourism’ raw material is represented by the attraction that certain nature’s elements or the greatest works of the human spirit are exercising on the viewer through these dimensional, demeanor, structural or functional features. “The beauty and novelty of things” thus become an attribute which, under normal management, is transformed into an inexhaustible resource, never consumed, only admired, during the “manufacturing process”.

In the geographical component of tourism science, the raw material is encompassed into the notions of “tourism heritage”, “tourism substance”, “attractive resource” or “tourism potential”, all of them bearing, basically, almost the same meaning. The exception is represented by certain authors (Snak, 1976; Glavan, 2000; Candea and Simion, 2006) that include in the tourism heritage the totality of the elements involved in its operation – firstly, the leisure, curative, accommodation and access infrastructures. Thus, presentation of some definitions can be relevant in this regard.

Therefore, Swizewski and Oancea (1977) mention that “the tourism substance represents the totality of the natural and anthropic resources and constitutes the basis of the potential tourist offer found in a territory”. Regarding the anthropic objectives, the above authors stress the fact that a large number of religion related buildings can be found throughout the territory.

Cocean (1996) states that “the tourism resources represent the totality of the attractive elements of a territory, regardless their origin or the relations created between them... They determine the size, the intensity and the diversity of the tourism streams, namely the inextricably value of the tourism intake and through it, of the economic efficiency”. It is worth to notice at this author the rigorous, detailed classification of the two types or resources (natural and anthropic), having as criteria the genesis and its specific, in the first case and respectively, the initial role of the man-made buildings.

According to this classification, the appealing potential of the religious tourism which we are dealing with in this analysis is composed of: sanctuaries, temples, hermitages, monk’s cells, churches, cathedrals (mosques, synagogues), monasteries, mausoleums, pyramids, cemeteries, stupas. These are part of two major groups of attractive objectives, namely those whose sole purpose was to practice religion (sanctuaries, temples, churches, cathedrals, convents) and the one dedicated to the sepulchral practices (mausoleums, pyramids, cemeteries, stupas).

Cianga (2006) includes in the definition of the term of tourism potential “totality of the attraction factors that belong to the natural and anthropic setting, harnessed through tourism landscaping which generate tourism streams coming from their own country or from abroad”.

The range of formulas and tourism resources classifications is extremely rich and nuanced, new criteria resulting from the research of the authors regarding some structural and spatial location characteristics of the proposed objectives are introduced thus reaching new stages of poses. We can take for example the one proposed by Clawson and Knetsch (1966), enriched later by others (Boniface, Cooper, 1994) taking into account the separation that comes between some functional tourism areas and the distance from the tourism demand and access. We can thus identify three different entities (areas with consumption resources, areas with basic resources and intermediary areas) the sole purpose of this classification being the one to encourage the actors in the field to reach their full potential.

In modern and contemporary times several important mutations can be noticed in the dynamic and structure of the tourism streams, under guidance, often repetitive, from the attractive values of the natural landscape towards the anthropic ones or the other way around. All along the way, religious objectives have been the top of tourism attractions through the artistic value they gained (architectural, pictorial, functional) and the sectorial activities lured the religion devotees with the same fervor.

1.1.2. The concept of religious tourism. Appearance and significance

From of all the subtypes and types of tourism, the religious one (considering the degree of organization and the number of participants) has been widely spread throughout time, pilgrimages to sacred places having been recorded since the early antiquity. „The pilgrimages represent for many an open gate towards the supernatural, a path between heaven and earth” (Chelini and Branthomme, 1982) and are known in literature (according to the website Geoturisme, considered an example for the numerous daily hits and the quality of its articles) under different names: pelerinaj (rom), pèlerinage (fr), wallfahrt (germ), pellegrinaggi (it), tirtha-yatra (hindu), ziyarath (arabic). According to the opinion of Martinez-Cardenas (2010) these pilgrimages are not only „the simplest shape of religious tourism”, but also the most representative touristic manifestations with such substance. The author also mentions that by „spiritual tourism” we can name those travels that are guided by a religious motivation.

Thus, if we follow the information offered by the previously website mentioned, we can easily notice before any other information regarding the Greek culture and civilisation the number of the spiritual journeys made to Delfi, Nemeea or Corint. If the following cities have become through time as the capital of these great religions: Jerusalem and Rome for Christianity, Mecca and Medina for Islam, Rummidei or Kucingara for Buddhism, Varanasi, Allahabad or Benares for Hinduism, Jerusalem for judaism etc. and have maintained their religious attractive aura for centuries, as their affirmation and spatial expansion amongst the followers, the number of sacred sites have multiplied so that the current map of pilgrims is at the forefront of Lourdes (France), Fatima (Portugal), Santiago de Compostela (Spain) or Czestochowa (Poland) for Catholics, Lhasa, or Kandi for Buddha followers, dozens of holy places on the banks of the Ganges or Brahmaputra for the eulogists of Siva or Visnu,

etc. Without encountering such a consistent affluence of participants, even millions of them, the sacred places in our country, it is worth mentioning also as they become year after year, targets to many pilgrimages in which participate, generally, tens of thousands of followers. These sacred places are as follows: Nicula, Rohia, Sambata de Sus or Iasi for the ortodox followers, Sumuleu Ciuc for the catholic followers etc.

In their analysis of this phenomenon, some authors (Noppen, Morisset, 2003) assess that the debut of the religious tourism had as motivation “the devotion of memory”, generated by adoring a saint or by the spiritual impact that the apparition of a new religion or of a mystical mood had on the mind. Starting with prehistoric times, when the first elements of the “religious conscience” appeared in the full spectrum of aspects of humanity and by the beginning of the 20th century the spiritual prevailed, being the point of origin of the travel that great crowds underwent towards the so-called “holy places” (sacred land, land of the gods, terre sacrée, Horster, 2010). Beginning with the customization of the tourism as a human activity, but also as a genuine science for leisure, curative and literacy, the term of “religious legacy” appears regarding the monuments or artefacts that became an attractive resource of cultural major origin. The same authors refer to the matter that, after the year 1980, a new type of religious tourism appears namely one conditioned by the “research of the spiritual experiences” outside the the religion framework but having as final mission to reanimate beliefs and abandoned cults, in large numbers, by the modern human.

Martines-Cardenas (2010) bases his definition on the same spiritual coordination that comes from the term of „spiritual tourism” as the activity that a group of persons do when they „are searching for something that connects the thought and the spirit through practicing the rituals that have a mystic character in their journeys”. According to the sketch below, the author places the religious tourism at the front end between the activities with a sacred character, like pilgrimages, and the secular activities, specific to tourism overall.

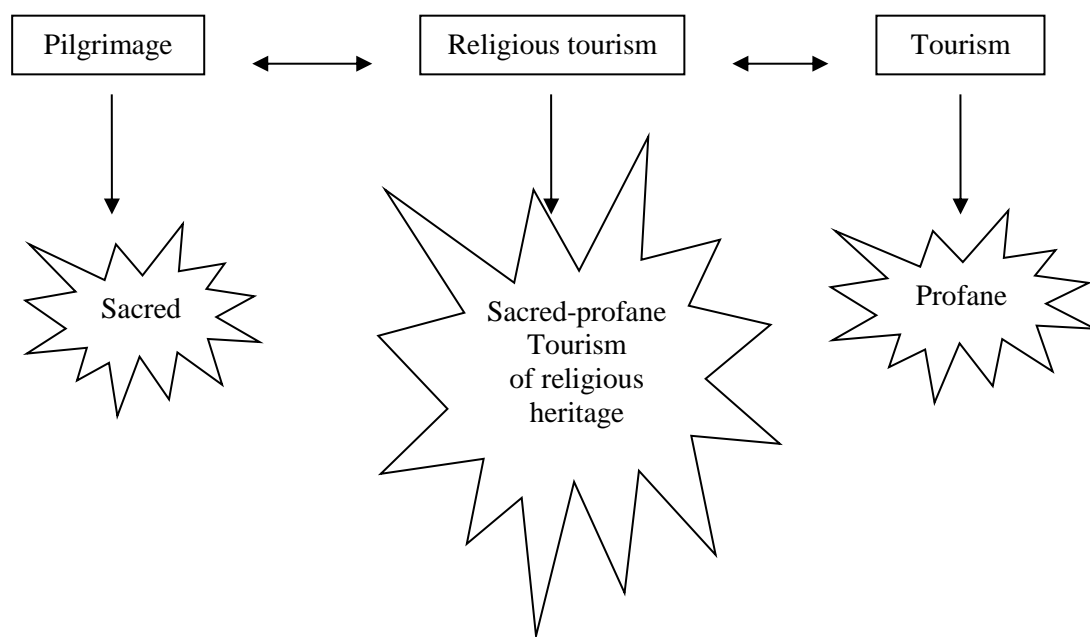


Fig. No. 1: The religious tourism in comparison with the common tourism and the pilgrimages
(Source: Martinez-Cardenas, 2010).

Different meanings of the terms “pilgrim” and “tourist” are defined by other authors like John Eade (1992) which, upon deep reflection on these two concepts, invokes without hesitation the imperious need to destructure these, fact that would evidenciate the numerous contradictions and ambiguities that are contained here.

With the same premises of conceptual distillation, while remarking the duality of the notion “religious tourism” that is underlined even in the title of one of his scientific articles (*Tourisme religieux ou touristes en milieu religieux?*), Bauer (1993) states that “the pilgrim is situated totally outside the tourism” and the fact that “the pilgrimage is not a tourism journey” but a spiritual experience with a pure religious purpose. He thus classifies the persons that visit the religious places as: pilgrims, traditional believers, liberal believers, the art, culture and ethnology missionaries together with the secular ideologists. In order to show the same inconsistency of content in these two terms, Bremer (2006) resorts to a classification of the places that are visited by two categories of visitors: *sacred places*, for the pilgrims and *tourism places*, for the common travellers.

According to the website *Geoturisme*, the religious tourism has three types of expression as follows: the spiritual one, when the man tries to connect with the Divinity; the sociological one, the contact that man has with the values of the sacred art of the diverse types of religions and the mixt one, during which these two desires are combined into a cultural result.

The individuality as a specific entity to the religious tourism in comparison with other subtypes of tourism has as basis a series of characteristics specific only to this term. Therefore, in the opinion of Maria Da Graca Mougá Pocas Santos (2003) (quoted by Sommuck Jongmeewasin, http://www.academia.edu/12252237/Religious_Tourism_Pilgrimage_and_Cultural_Tourism), the religious tourism is defined as having the following five characteristics:

- cheap, voluntary and temporary travel;
- religious motivation of the travel;
- stay completed with other motivations;
- the aim of the travel is the religious place (attraction);
- the journey towards the destination does not coincide with a religious practice.

It can be noticed that some of these characteristics are exclusive, being found only in the case of one subtype of tourism (such as, for example, the travel motivated by religion) while others can be found in other subtypes of tourism, mainly the cultural tourism in general.

1.1.3. Religious tourism – classification

The question regarding the classification of the religious tourism is as normal as it can be, the reference literature having numerous examples when classified either as type or as a special shape of tourism. The definition of it as subtype is totally random. We try to eliminate any ambiguities from our analysis, to reach an exhaustive classification of this term with the role of fixing its hierarchal relations into a coherent matrix, naming the superior and inferior entities, but also the one situated at the same level with the term.

The desire of assigning activities in a particular pattern, including those with a sacred connotation or being carried out in a religious environment, has been a fertile coordinator of the debates from the beginning in the field of tourist activity until today. The constant tendency of the actors in the field of tourism to enrich the offer leads implicitly to the appearance of new forms of recreation, cure or culture, which, with more or less justification, some authors consider them types or subtypes of tourism. It is what happens sometimes with religious tourism. As a result, in order to achieve a complete conceptual clarification, a brief breakthrough in the field of these debates seems to us more than necessary, the adequate typology of religious tourism allowing not only its rigorous analysis but also the design of a development related to the other forms of tourism with which it associates or competes.

In this fluid context, the classification of religious tourism by various authors, to all three basic taxonomic entities: type, subtype and form of tourism, it is important to be noticed also a theological, religious perspective on it, in which there appears an obvious typological complexity and a "multidimensional quality" supported by its historical, artistic, theological, pedagogical, didactic and anthropological components (Mazza, 2007).

A first review focuses on the type of tourism defined by Poser in the "Der Fremdenverkehr im Riesengebirge" published in 1939 (Susan, 1980, p.194). This author distinguishes five types of

tourism, namely: tourism for treatment, summer recreation tourism, winter sports tourism, short distance recreation tourism and transit tourism. It is easy to observe, as Cocean (1996) and Contiu (2012) do, that three of these types are only forms of the same type of recreational tourism and transit tourism cannot be defined as a separate type (any real tourist is not proposing to limit its travel to a simple transit of territories as a purpose of his recreation or treatment!). It is no less true that during the mentioned period the marked dissociation between the type and the form of tourism was not conceptually marked. Another fact that could be perceived by other two authors (Hunziker W. and Krapf K.), which in the near future (1941) analyze them undifferentiated, their merit, in our view, is the identification and individualization of the pilgrimage tourism.

Cocean (1996, 1999, 2007); Cocean, Vlasceanu, Negoescu (2003); Cocean, Dezsi (2009), bring a number of notable contributions to the definition of types and forms of tourism, but also to the typological systematization of the anthropic tourism resources, including those involved in the development of religious tourism. In the view of these authors, the "type of tourism" is an integrative concept of maximum generality, a model defined by characteristic processes, different from other types (models), having specific causalities, deployments and finalities. Thus, only four types of tourism are distinguished: recreational, curative, cultural and polyvalent (mixed). Religious tourism is tied to cultural tourism and tangential to multi-purpose or mixed tourism.

Regarding the definition, identification and systematization of forms of tourism, the concerns are no less sustained.

Thus, Cocean (1996) identifies general forms, specific to all known types of tourism, and specific forms, specific to each type. The attached sketch defines the definition criteria and the diversity of the former, and religious tourism can be differentiated in most of them. (Table 2). This is what Rinschede (1992) predicts and classifies the forms of religious tourism (we notice from this its superior positioning in relation to the concept of "form of tourism"!), according to the duration of its development as follows: short-term religious tourism to religious objectives or centers, participation in occasional events) and long-lived religious tourism (pilgrimages or part-sessions to national or international religious events). In terms of the organizational criterion, there are forms related to the number of participants (individual or group), social structure, means of transport, etc.

Other researchers, such as Snak, Baron, Neacsu (2003), summarize their views on the classification of tourism forms by reformulating or introducing new criteria such as the degree of mobility of the tourist (travel and travel tourism or circuit tourism; visiting and transit tourism), the use of travel time (long-term or residential tourism, medium-stay tourism, short-stay tourism), seasonality (winter, summer and circumnavigation, transportation used by tourists including tourist activities such as hunting and sport fishing, age category and tourist occupation (youth tourism - so-called "first-time" tourists, active tourism - "second-age tourists" and tourism for "third age", retirees or the age of "retirement" from activities (organized tourism, on own or non-organized, mixed or semi-organized) etc. Without any difficulty, we find that the activities specific to religious tourism can embrace the absolute majority of the forms of tourism described by the three authors.

The wide range of views on the issue in question is extremely prodigious, we conclude their presentation with that of Chelini and Branthomme (1982) and Griffin (2007), which consider religious tourism as a form of tourism through which, individually or in group, the practitioners try to satisfy a number of spiritual, religious needs.

In the factual reality of the activity, the forms of tourism prove to be flexible entities depending on the factors that intervene, by the local circumstances, by substituting each other or by conjugating themselves to the fullest satisfaction of the needs of the tourist or groups of tourists.

The framing of religious tourism in a particular type, subtype or form of practice cannot, in our opinion, be made without a balanced and profound discovery in the meanings of the tourist phenomenon but also of the religious phenomenon at the same time, the two binding organically.

By granting the definition of tourism written by Cocean (1996) a greater credit ("the tourism is a social-economic phenomenon in a continued expansion generated by the human need for knowledge, recreation and physical-psychic recovery...") we acknowledge that, on one side the religious edifices, no matter their religion and the functions they have (to practice the cult or the

sepulchral) form first-order objectives of the religious tourism, objectives of the cultural, knowledge and satisfaction through knowledge and education of the spiritual needs. They enter this way altogether in the tourism domain in general, those who are eager to visit such objectives having a free option to see it as tourists.

If we analyze them strictly from an economic point of view, these travels have the same connotation as the one that are characteristic for the tourism, the people that take place to celebrating the patron of a church or different pilgrimage are paying for the transport, the accommodation, the food, for the different product sold at the sites of these pilgrimages or celebrations etc.

As a result, if the social purpose is different from the one offered by the general tourism offer, which is classically defined, the participant resolves it by displacement (visiting) the spiritual needs of confessional nature, the economic one is similar to any recreative, curative or cultural tourism practice.

Consequently, by accepting the existence of the four above mentioned basic types of tourism: recreational, curative, cultural and mixed (complex or polyvalent), rigorously defined according to the motivations and options of the tourists who practice them, we seem to have a problem when trying to fix the place of religious tourism in this typological matrix.

Thus, to consider religious tourism as a special type, equivalent to the above, it is necessary to argue as to how its practice and its fundamental purpose fail to provide in a convincing way. We have to deal, in the absolute majority of cases, with activities to visit religious objectives, similar to those aimed at museums, historical, cultural, economic, ethnographic objectives. This fact entitles us, like other authors, to consider religious tourism as an integral part of cultural tourism and not as a type of self-tourism.

By eliminating the hypothesis of considering it as a type of tourism in itself and including it as a component part of cultural tourism, we are face to face with the second dilemma, namely whether religious tourism is a form of tourism practice or is it more than that?

Clarification of this problem can be achieved by comparing it with other forms of cultural tourism, namely: ethnographic tourism, educational tourism, scientific and artistic tourism, gastronomic tourism, visiting tourism, and transit tourism.

Thus, if for all of the mentioned forms the option to travel and stay is dictated by the need to know new realities from a certain existential sphere, of cultivation, by assuming them, in the situation of religious tourism practiced during the feasts or pilgrimages, during the visits to places of relics, icons or statues of miracles, the purpose of the journey is different: the communion of the soul and the thought with the Divinity. The practitioner already knows the attributes of this relationship, through his visit or pilgrimage he seeks divine revelation and the fulfilment of some entirely different spiritual aspirations. Consequently, taking into account first the motivation, it cannot be resembled to other forms of cultural tourism. Particular aspects also appear in terms of its practice, as feasts of patronage of churches and pilgrimage have, as a human activity, a certain degree of originality.

As specific forms of practice, the subtype of religious cultural tourism recognizes: pilgrimages, feast of patrons of churches, visits to places with relics, miraculous icons and statues, visits to places of power, healing, etc.

Taxonomic aspects also appear in the approaches to the territorial tourism, including the one studied.

In the framework of religious tourism, the same structural and spatial entities are outlined as in the case of other forms of tourism belonging to recreational, curative or mixed tourism types. *The touristic element (point), synonymous with the objective, the complex, the tourist area, the area and the tourist region* are the classification that can be used efficiently (Cocean, 1996). The individualized church, the monastic monastery ensemble, the tourist complex, the group of churches from the large urban areas or from a heavily populated territory are constituted into a religious tourist area, the Sub-Carpathian or mountainous region and the region as a whole exemplifies the previous mentioned terms. Taking into account the structure of the attractive resources and the major share of the related tourist flows, the Northern part of the South-Muntenia Development Region, approached by this work, is almost entirely comprised (except for the Carpathian Mountains), in a region of cultural tourism where the potential for religious attractiveness (churches, monasteries, hermitages, trotters) is predominant.

Also, under the tourist region aspect, Cianga (2006) includes the entire unit into the "Southern tourist region" defined in the Northern part, Carpathian and Sub-Carpathian, of a mixed natural and anthropogenic potential, and at the plain, predominantly, by a cultural potential.

Finally, for Ielenicz and Comanescu (2009), most of the territory covered is integrated in the tourist region of Arges-Prahova, with a complex character, having four tourist areas: Valea Prahovei, Valea Ialomitei, Arges and Targului River.

1.1.4. Religious tourism - a sustainable activity?

A question of theoretical origin to which our study aims to provide an adequate response is that of the sustainability degree of religious tourism. The concept of "sustainable tourism", referring to its temporal perpetuation for an indefinite period, takes place in the literature during the last decade of the last century (Butler, 1999, p. 11). He draws his opinions based on the Brundtland Report, "Our Common Future" (1987), which focuses on aspects of sustainable development, the debate that could not bypass one of the most dynamic branches of the current global economy, which is tourism.

There is an increasing emphasis of the concerns in this respect, the most recent global event dedicated to the phenomenon (International Congress of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage, Fatima, Portugal, November 22-23, 2017), entitled "The potential of sacred places as an instrument of sustainable tourism development".

There are, therefore, at least four favourable conditions that make religious tourism an activity that is sustainable, with virtually unlimited durability. These catalysts are:

- the continuous affirmation of the religious consciousness to the absolute majority of the Earth's population;
- the material and spiritual heritage of extremely rich and varied religious origin, in continuous multiplication and diversification;
- the permanent need for culture, for widening the sphere of knowledge, including in the space assumed by religion;
- continuous diversification of forms of practicing religious tourism and increasing its economic efficiency, etc

Technological progress and the upgrade of transport infrastructure will facilitate access to as many religious sites as possible in difficult places (abbey, crosses, votive crosses, monasteries), which will lead to a widening and diversified supply. Correlated with improving and raising the quality standard of accommodation facilities associated with religious or auxiliary edifices. Also, the proliferation of rural tourism is an effective vector of highlighting the highly important, religious and spatial religious objectives.

1.2. Methodology

The methodological arsenal used in touristic insights about the religious manifestations and practices does not fundamentally differ from that of tourism in general. Therefore, in the case of religious tourism, we meet the same fundamental principles that govern the scientific approach in the field: spatiality, causality, integration, historicism, comparative and ecological advantage.

They are being debated by specific methods (observation, analysis, synthesis, estimation, comparison, prospecting) that correspond to all the means of action (description, explanation, hierarchy, dating, selecting and evaluation) (Cocean, 2011). Obviously, this system of methodological elements can be enriched, especially at the level of investigative means where the contribution of modern technologies can be substantial.

At the level of principles, we consider its *sustainable exploitation* by appropriate valorization as well as the *protection and preservation of the religious tourism heritage* by integrating the valuable elements in protected places.

A priori consulting of the bibliography related to the cultural tourism, in general and of the religious tourism, in particular, as well as of that one focused on the geographical region where the

phenomenon is analyzed, represents the first step to be undertaken in order to be introduced in this field, to become familiar with the subject of the scientific debate initiated and with the territory where the religious tourism is materialized.

The inventory of rare books in this field, which have become real attractions given their age and their mode of printing, but also the references relating to the history of each religious edifice is of a real interest.

For the region analyzed, it must be mentioned the following ones: “*Liturghierul*” (1508), “*Octoihul*” (1510) and “*Tetraevangheliarul*” (1512) written by the famous hieromonk Macarie, printed half of the millennium ago, in Targoviste which was the old seat of Wallachia at that time.

In a similar way, the cartographic documentation of the region will be investigated in order to take notice of the dynamic of certain process belonging to this area of interest or to the approaching ones.

The *a priori consultation of the bibliography* of cultural tourism in general and of the form of religious tourism in particular, but also of the one focused on the geographical region where the phenomenon in question is researched, represents the first step to be taken for the "introduction" in the field, for familiarization with the subject the scientific debate initiated and the territory where it receives factual materialization. It is of real interest to invent the books of rare churches that have become true attractions by their age and way of printing, as well as references to the history of each religious edifice. For the studied region it is worth mentioning the *Liturghierul* (1508), the *Octoihul* (1510) and the *Tetraevangheliarul* (1512), works of the same famous hieromonk Macarie, printed in the town of Wallachia at that time, Targoviste, half a millennium ago. Similarly, the cartographic documentation of the region will be consulted to identify the dynamics of certain processes belonging to the sphere of interest or its tangents.

The direct and indirect observation, stationary or itinerant, constitutes a universally valid method, including the phenomenology specific to the tourism activities determined by the religious infrastructure of a territory, becoming an attractive first order resource, as well as the forms of practicing various cults. It is synonymous with "field research", with the rigorous "radiography" of the spatial realities characteristic of the given domain, with the possibility of "in situ" registration of the stage of affirmation of a tourist phenomenon or another. In this case, the observation cannot overlook the slopes of the religious destinations, the spatial location, the typological diversity, the stored material and spiritual values, their physical condition and the current functions. Also, the versed eye of the researcher will not miss the physical condition and the diversity of access infrastructure (road, rail, air, cableway), accommodation (guest rooms for the management of religious places, hostels, chalets, motels, hotels in or near localities), auxiliary facilities that tourists call during their stay in the region. It is also worthwhile to observe the disfunctions in the exploitation and operation of various confessional goals and the possibilities of optimizing their valorization. In the present case, the observation also took into account the religious activities during the times of dedication days and pilgrimages, their way of organizing and unfolding, the disfunctions that occurred during the period of development, etc.

As an adjacent mean of observation, it remains “*the description*” which must be rigorous, detailed and suggestive. It has an important role in presenting the touristic attractions and highlighting the objective of interests for visitors. Promoting a touristic objective cannot be imagined without a proper description of it, focusing on its architectural features, uniqueness, age or functions carried out.

Furthermore, it is worth to mention **the investigation** based on *interviews*, *surveys* and *questionnaires*. Its role in finding the motivations of the religious tourism is very important, the complexity of emotions and feelings faced by the practitioners of this form of cultural tourism being recognized. In order to realize the above-mentioned analysis, we firstly proceed to realize interviews with personalities and actors in the field of religious sector, both during the period of achieving information to prepare this thesis, and during the period of phenomenological analysis, its purpose being to understand the perceptions and conceptions specific to this field of activity, as well as the psychology of the religious practitioner. Secondly, for my research paper, I found useful the attached questionnaire, which included a section related to the identification data, a section of recommendations and 6 questions about the purpose, the means of transport used, how people found out about this

pilgrimage, the willingness to attend religiously-touristic events. On May 6th 2016 during the pilgrimage which took place at Nucet Monastery, 119 interviews were performed and 119 questionnaires were filled in. In order to have a proper view on how the participants in such a religious activity perceive and assume it, I tried to apply the questionnaire taking into account the age, sex and qualifications and the results obtained were more than satisfactory and relevant.

The analysis defines the second stage of the investigation, where the information obtained by various means and from various sources (libraries, religious institutions, administrative institutions, companies, with the activity in the field of tourism, the profile sites, etc.) are processed. Within this research paper, the analysis focuses on the structure of the religious potential, on the weight of different types of religious touristic objectives and as well as on the infrastructure access and, accommodation and food units, on the dynamic and spatial orientation and participant's flow. Using the SWOT analysis is more than convenient through highlighting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats on the above-mentioned field.

The third step of research is dedicated to **synthesis** whose purpose is to differentiate and draw aspects identified both when we speak about the attractiveness potential of the religion, where the objectives are grouped and ranked according to their value, as well as in the case of religious tourism infrastructure.

The *evaluation methods* of the religious tourism potential are various, but each one provides a certain dose of relativity due to the subjective elements involved in the assessment of certain attractive features of it. The antiquity of objectives, the architectural style in which they were built, the missions carried out over time, the dimensions, the spatial location are aspects that have to be taken into account when we should estimate the value of them, despite the assessment method or formula applied.

In a relative temporal succession, it is important to mention the methoda proposed by Sandru, (1970):

$$P = I^i \cdot I^d \cdot I^a$$

where: I^i – raking index of the attraction areas; I^d – endowment index; I^a – accessibility index. We can notice that the first value could define the attractiveness value of the religious elements, while the others are related to the infrastructure and accessibility.

The formula developed by Jordan and Nicolescu (1971), in which,

$$Pt = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n T_i}{n}$$

where T_1, T_2, \dots, T_n means factors, with attractive value, which may be used in our research only if we adapt T_i factor to the particularities of the religious potential (T_1 – attractiveness of worships; T_2 – attractiveness due to the presence of miracle icons, relics or workplaces; T_3 – attractiveness due to pilgrimages or dedication days, etc.).

Another formula elaborated to find out the attractiveness value it was developed by Erdeli and Istrate (1996) where:

$$I_a = \sum_{i=1}^n q_i \times C_i x_i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n$$

where I_a means the attractiveness formula, q_i show the importance of each element and C_i the quality of the element in relation to the number of items. In this case too, the researcher must adapt the formula to a given characteristic and thus, choosing the objectives and religious events based on the results provided after applying the above-mentioned formula.

It is more suitable and expressive the formula based on parametric values, proposed by Cocean (1984), where the attractiveness potential is assessed on the basis in which the religious element is appointed: 1, uniquely international, national, regional or local, 2, number of tourist features contained, 3 the extent and time to satisfy the tourism demand, 4 its capacity to be exploited or not (very favorable, favorable, acceptable, unfavorable). The value of the indices is between 2 and 10. It

has been adapted to the exigencies of our study, being detailed and supplemented with new elements, as follows.

A. It is well known that **the uniqueness** of a touristic objective contributes significantly to the decision of a tourist to visit.

The degree of uniqueness quantifies those elements which make the objective a valuable one starting at national level to international level, such as: style elements and architecture, all kinds of historical-religious and cultural events hosted by it, personalities that have marked the existence of objective, the presence of unique cultural heritage elements in a certain area, the uniqueness of the landscape in which it is located as well as its reference in art and literature.

The score scale is as follows:

- international level - 10 points;
- national level - 7 points;
- the interregional level - 6 points;
- regional level - 5 points;
- inter-county Level - 4 points;
- county level - 3 points;
- the local level - 2 points.

The international value is synonymous with the maximum score, index 10. As an important criterion, its weight will be 25% of the total.

B. *Attractive valances* stored by a religious objective impose it trenchantly on the tourist's attention. In this criterion, I have endeavored to encompass all the attractions that a religious object can offer itself, but also the area in which it is located, so as to spark the interest of tourists, whether we are talking about pilgrims or visitors looking for alternatives of tourism for recreation or even for educational and curative purposes. Among these valences, the most common are: the age of the objective, the fame of the founder, the architectural elements, the mobile and immovable heritage, the complementary attractions associated with it.

The age (B.1) is an important criterion for appreciating a cultural-religious objective, it invariably invoking the interest of the visitor, especially those belonging to the Middle Ages (until the 17th century) and the beginning of the Modern Age (18th-19th centuries). Even if there are not many in the studied area, pre-Christian sites enjoy special attention from the tourists, especially the rupestrian, precisely because of their appreciable, millennial age. The suggested score for this sub-criterion is 10 if the objectives is dated to sec. XIII, 8, if the objective is dated between sec. XIII and XVII and 6, if the objective is dated between sec. XVIII and XIX.

The fame of the founder (B.2) and of those who have contributed to the development and modernization of the objective will be marked with 7, if one of the rulers of Wallachia was a founder. Also, if recognized personalities have contributed to the renovation / expansion / upgrading / beauty / endowment, the index will have the value of 3.

Architectural elements (B.3) are perceived as values of high expressivity. Among the architectural features that contribute to the attractiveness of an objective, the most important are: architectural style, construction material (stone, wood, brick) and the dimensions of the objective where the maximum score is 10, given for objectives with original style (such as that of Curtea de Arges Monastery) or of exceptional sizes.

Mobile and immovable property (B.4) consists of icons creators of miracles, relics, valuable church inventory items, museums, famous paintings and graves. By giving to the first two three points and the other four 1 point each, a maximum score of 10 points is reached.

Pilgrimages (B.5)

Pilgrimages are of two kinds: permanent and seasonal. The permanent ones attract especially miraculous icons, while the seasonal ones take place on religious occasions, feasts of the church's patron etc. Some objectives have both types of pilgrimage.

Permanent pilgrimage (B.5.1) was scored 7 (ie. places with miracles or relics) and seasonal (B.5.2) with 3, their sum being the score for this sub-criterion.

$B.5 = B.5.1 + B.5.2$, the maximum being 10.

The complementary attractions (B.6) are one of the criteria that make a decisive contribution to increasing the number of days of stay, but also to attract a diverse range of tourists, depending on education, age, income.

As complementary attractions I have identified in the studied region the following:

- historical / religious / cultural attractions (museums, fortresses, theaters, libraries, cultural and exhibition centers, monuments, statues, other churches, etc.)

- recreational attractions (amusement parks, shopping complexes, sports complexes, parks, games rooms, cinemas, winter sports facilities, tourist routes, landscapes, etc.)

- balneo-climatic attractions (treatment basins, saline, treatment springs, aerosols, etc.)

Their aggregate score is 10.

Accessibility (B.7) becomes an attractive criterion in the context in which it reveals facilities in terms of distance to objective, quality and diversity of access infrastructure.

Especially for organized groups easy accessibility is an important criterion for determining the destination. Moreover, for foreign tourists, the presence of an airport within a radius of 50 km is decisive.

The access to the tourist-religious objectives is mostly done by road. Thus, for access on the communal road there is 2, on the county road there are 4, and on national or European road, with 7.

At the above score, add 3 points for closeness to the airport.

Accommodation structures (B.8) are of two kinds: own and adjacent. For the existing accommodation facilities will be given a score of 6 points, and for the adjacent, 4 points, the maximum being 10

The formula for calculating the Attractive Valency Criterion is: $B = (B.1 + B.2 + B.3 + B.4 + B.5 + B.6 + B.7 + B.8) / 8$, its maximum value being 10. Because I consider it the most important criterion, its share will be 40% of the total.

C. *The length of the stay* is another important criterion in the assessment. Since the time required to visit a tourist-religious objective does not exceed one day, we considered that the presence of complementary attractions is the one that can increase the stay of tourists. Thus, for the historical / cultural / religious attractions (C.1) I recorded 3 points, for the recreational attractions (C.2) I recorded 3 points, and for the balneo-climatic attractions (C.3) I recorded 4 points.

$C = C.1 + C.2 + C.3$, the maximum being 10.

The weight of the criterion in the total score will be 25%.

D. *Indices of appreciation and value.* The presence of the objective in the tourist packages of tourist agencies is an important recognition of its attractive potential.

Thus: if the target is present in international circuits, it is scored 6 points, and if it is present in national circuits, it is scored 4 points.

Additionally, the presence of individual foreign tourists, presence in tourist guides, the existence of promotional materials, and the presence of authorized guides can each bring 1 point to this criterion, with a maximum of 10 points.

The weight of the criterion in the total score will be 10%.

Consequently, the tourist potential of the tourist-religious objective (P) will be calculated with the formula:

$$P=0,25*A+0,4*B+0,25*C+0,1*D,$$

and P has values from 0 to 10

The tourist potential is very high, if P is at least 9,
The tourist potential is high if P is at least 7,
The tourist potential is moderate, if P is at least 5,
Tourist potential is low if P is less than 3.

To assess the attractive potential of religious landscape elements, we can selectively appeal to the proposed indicator grid for cultural landscapes in general by Cocean, David (2014). Thus, from the wide range of parameters subject to assessment by the two authors, the religious landscape is appropriate for spatial localization, territorial dynamics, accomplished functions, aesthetic valences and the visibility.

The GIS methodology proves, also in this case, to be indispensable, the establishment of a data bank on the subject under consideration, the high-resolution mapping of all constituent elements of the regional tourism system, the development of evolving scenarios on the basis of numerous development proposals, facilitating both the approach scientifically and perceiving the results obtained by those interested, either members of the scientific community or the social community itself.

Like all current geographical introspections, religious tourism cannot ignore the most modern methodology, that is, the Geographic Information System. Operating with multiple and diverse information, with a matrix of relationships and conditions, with varied plans and complex interferences, religious tourism offers the mentioned methodology a fertile field of applicability, statistically and cartographically illustrated in the study.

"The time, the space and the context are important elements to describe the space-temporal behavior of the tourist" (Knaap, van der 1999). According to this author, GIS facilitates the highlighting and deciphering of this behavior through four categories of data, namely: tourist data, data on the perception of the time and the activities and information about the landscape and tourist sites, including their encoding. It is easy to see that that methodology can also be applied to religious tourism, where we encounter a specific perception of the context and activities carried out, a landscape and unique tourist places, making it possible to typify and encode them.

CHAPTER 2. THE RELIGIOUS TOURISM POTENTIAL OF THE NORTHERN PART OF THE SOUTH MUNTENIA DEVELOPMENT REGION

We define by *Attractive Religious Potential* all the objects and manifestations of religious origin, existing and developed in the analysed territory, which is or may be of interest to a large mass of visitors, but also to the promoters of tourism development in general. It is equivalent to the "raw material" of the mentioned tourism subtype, in the absence of which activities with such a profile are unimaginable. The concept does not include its significance, as it does in the vision of some authors that come mostly from the economic field, the infrastructure and the adjacent tourist product, which serve and complement the practice of the tourist act itself, being a necessary and mandatory derivative of a good and efficient exploitation, in economic and social terms, of those objectives. Please note also that the phrase *potentially attractive* should by no means be treated as tourist *product* or *offer*. The reasoning in this regard is quite eloquent: since the overwhelming majority of the religious objectives in the studied region are not yet included in a form of tourism exploitation, we cannot speak of a well-defined offer, but, at most a primary one. Moreover, we cannot discuss the presence of a tourism product resulted from facilities and equipment that meets the requirements of modern tourism.

2.1. Geographical location of the region and its tourist impact

Similar to all other human activities, tourism is influenced in its territorial and temporal dynamics by the geographic location of the space in which it is generally carried out and the elements that make up its own system in particular. Being located in a "central place" has quite a lot of other functional attributes compared to the peripheral, marginal. Also, in the case of tourism, as in the case of industry or trade, can be applied certain concepts of the "Location theory" formulated by August Losch (1940), the distance factor acting here also restrictively, both in terms of the cost of travel by tourists, and especially of the amount of free time consumed by the same visitor to conduct them.

In tourism, the influence of the spatial location of the objectives is directly and permanently related to the place (area) of origin of the tourist demand. The closer it is, the probability of establishing consistent flows of tourists increases. And vice versa.

The geographic position of the studied region must be approached from several points of view, namely: within the country, of the development region, in relation to the big tourist centers, in correlation with the main transport routes and, last but not least, compared to large geographic units.

The tourist area analysed is located in the Central-Southern part of the country (Figure 5) with an extension of 15,642 sq. Km, which represents 6.56% of Romania's surface. It has a population of 1,983,871 inhabitants resulting in a density of 127 inhabitants/ square km, higher than the national density (93.6 inhabitants/square km) and then the density of the South Muntenia Development Region (94.6 inhabitants/square km). In terms of living environment, the urban population of the study area (45.4%) is higher than that of South-Muntenia Development Region (42.9%), but lower than the national share (56.4%).

2.2. The structure of the religious tourism potential

It is dependent on the age, extent and confessional diversity of the religious phenomenon specific to the region. As a result, in the preamble of the detailed presentation of the attractive religious potential of the three counties in the Northern part of the South-Muntenia Development Region, we find useful to make a brief insight into the church organization, knowing that it differs from the political-administrative one.

From the point of view of the religious heritage with significant tourist valences, in the analyzed region there are three cults, namely the Orthodox which is predominant and to whom there is associated a limited number of Romano Catholic and Mozaic cultural attractions.

2.2.1. *The religious organization of the studied space entity*

The three counties that are the subject of this study are hierarchically integrated into the Mitropoly of Muntenia and Dobrogea but belong to the different archbishops: the Archbishopric of Bucharest (Prahova County), the Archbishopric of Arges and Muscelului (Arges County) and the Archbishopric of Targoviste (Dambovita County). This sometimes makes it difficult to develop common strategies, including in the field of religious tourism.

The Mitropoly of Muntenia and Dobrogea was founded in Curtea de Arges in 1359 (it was called The Mitropoly of Ungrovlahia), the first Metropolitan being Iachint. Between 1517 and 1668 it was established in Targoviste, then it was moved by the ruler Radu Leon to Bucharest where it operates nowadays.

The Metropolitan of Muntenia and Dobrogea is the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, who also has the title of Archbishop of Bucharest.

The Bucharest Archbishopric includes the city of Bucharest and Ilfov and Prahova counties. It is divided into 10 deacons with 772 parishes and has 1167 parochial and monastic places of worship (*culte.gov.ro*). There are 343 churches, 19 monasteries and hermitages in Prahova County. Archbishop is His Beatitude Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (2007).

The Archbishopric of Targoviste includes Dambovita County, residing in Targoviste and was founded in 1991. It consists of 5 deaneries with 326 parishes, and 302 places of worship (of which twelve are monasteries and hermitages), 38 of which are declared historical monuments. The Archdiocese has a Christian social centre, 5 social assistance offices, a theology faculty, a theological seminary, and a school for church singers.

The leader of this Archbishopric is His Eminence Hon Metropolitan Nifon, Archbishop of Targoviste *ad personam* (1999).

Archbishopric of Arges and Muscel includes Argeş County and resides in Curtea de Arges, following the footsteps of the former Metropolitan of Ungrovlahia, XIV-XVI. It was re-established as a ward in 1990 and consists of seven deacons with 497 parishes and 538 cult places (of which 26 are monasteries and hermitages). Also, in the archdiocese are: 11 social assistance centres, a theology faculty (Piteşti), two theological seminaries (Campulung-Muscel and Curtea de Arges) and a school of church singers (Curtea de Arges). Since 2009, given its significance, it is passed by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church to the rank of archbishopric. (Ibid)

The hierarch of this archbishopric is the High Priest Calinic Argesanul, Archbishop of Arges and Muscel (1990).

The Roman Catholic Church is organized in six dioceses, equivalent to Orthodox Episcopates, out of which two (Alba Iulia, whose existence dates back to the 11th century, and Bucharest) are Archdioceses. These are led by a bishop, and the Head of the Church is Major Archbishop and Cardinal. The diocesan parishes in the counties of the studied area belong to the Archdiocese of Bucharest, which has 70 parishes in administration (*arcb.ro*) and whose Archbishop - Metropolitan is His Eminence Dr Ioan Robu (1984).

The mosaic cult had a widespread in Romania before the Second World War, with numerous Jewish communities operating in most of the historical-geographic provinces, including Muntenia. The events of the conflagration period and the end of it have led to the drastic diminishing of the practitioners of this cult. The confessional activity is currently run by the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania (led by the president Aurel Vainer and chief rabbi Rafael Schaffer), whose headquarter is in Bucharest. According to statistics (*culte.gov.ro*), in Romania there were only 3,519 believers of the mosaic cult in 2011, belonging to 78 communities and communes (in localities where the number of members is low are only communes) in Bucharest and in 30 counties of the country. In Romania there are 103 churches (December 2015), many of which are historical and architectural monuments including those in Targoviste, Pitesti and Ploiesti. (*ibidem*).

The religious tourism potential of the Northern part of the South-Muntenia Development Region consists of three major groups of attractions, namely:

- Worship and sepulchral edifices
- Sacred sites and places
- Religious manifestations

2.2.2. Worship and sepulchral edifices

These are constituted, quantitatively and qualitatively, in the most consistent part of the region's attractive religious potential. Although closely related, the two types of edifices have totally different weights in the general matrix of the phenomenon, objectives intended for the practice of various cults, detaching themselves in number, confessional variety, architecture and functions in relation to the others.

We notice that this category of tourist attractions consists of two distinct groups of religious objectives, namely: edifices intended to practice religious worship, regardless of confession, and edifices with sepulchral, burial and funeral functions.

Their grouping into one major category has its explanation in close functional correlation and spatial association between them, with almost every church having, for example, its own cemetery located either in its own hinterland or in its proximity.

2.2.2.1. Cathedrals

The cathedrals impose the tourist interest through a combination of features such as: dimension, architectural style, interior facilities, ecclesiastical functions fulfilled. They are characterized by a complex architecture and are especially specific to the European and American space where Christianity is predominant. The architecture is the main tourist attraction of the cathedrals, without minimizing the interest generated by the historical function of some of them (Notre Dame in Paris, the cathedral of York) where there were crowned the emperors or kings of France or England (P. Cocean , 2006).

The word cathedral comes from the Latin word "cathedra", meaning seat or place to stay. It refers to the presence of the bishop's chair or throne inside the edifice of worship, which its detail architecture contains directly.

The cathedral (in Latin *cathedralis*, in French *cathedrale*) is a central church in a large city, where divine service is usually held by the hierarch of the place (be it bishop, archbishop, metropolitan, cardinal, patriarch or a group of priests, etc.). (ibidem)

The cathedral is the main church of a bishopric / diocese. Each diocese therefore officially has a single church with a cathedral function, the rest being churches.

Due to the fact that in the original Christianity each city / fortress had its bishop, sometimes the main church in a large city is called a "cathedral", even if it does not have that function, the city being not the centre of the eparchy. (ibidem).

1. Cathedral of the "Holy Apostles Peter and Pavel" in Mioveni

For a city with just over 30,000 inhabitants (until 1989 it was only a commune, Colibasi), the decision to build a cathedral of this size was appreciated by many as an ambitious and difficult to achieve at that time. But it has undoubtedly won the place of nodal point of the city, its true zero kilometre. Benefiting from an ultra-central location, the cathedral is the most representative construction of the respective urban settlement.

The works of the cathedral began in 1992, when the foundation stone was laid, and lasted two decades, being inaugurated on July 1st 2012, during the celebration of the "Holy Apostles Petru and Pavel" - the patrons of the Cathedral itself - through a consecration service that was officiated by His Eminence Calinic Argeșeanul, Archbishop of Argeș and Muscel.

By far the main attraction of the cathedral is its impressive dimensions: 40 m high, 66 m long and 36 m wide (according to some sources it is considered the largest in southern Romania). The cathedral can accommodate up to 1,500 believers (and, of course, potential visitors). The architecture has strong Byzantine influences, marble being the fabric that used to cover it. The unique mosaic icons are enhancing the Byzantine touch of the 14th century of the edifice. (Figure no. 7)



Fig. no 7: The cathedral "Holy Apostles Peter and Pavel" in Mioveni
(Source: *Jurnalul de Argeș*)

Mioveni city is located only 15 km from Pitesti, on NR 73 Pitesti-Campulung Muscel, thus the cathedral enjoys good accessibility and connection with all the tourist-religious attractions of the residence of the county.

Also, the existence of the Renault-Dacia plant on the territory of the locality, where many French and foreign specialists work, thus can be exploited the opportunity to promote the cathedral, namely making it popular abroad and increasing the number of external visitors.

2.2.2.2. Monasteries

The monasteries are architectural ensembles with religious and habitat attributions, but also with many attractive valences derived from the edifices, the constructive styles, the fame of the omnipresent churches, the fortified premises, the cultural function etc. The monastic life unfolded within them has been accompanied by a permanent cultural concern concretized in the elaboration and printing of works included in the spiritual patrimony of our nation. Also, around many monasteries functioned schools designed to spread the interest for knowledge among young people.

As specific microhabitats, having the main purpose of communicating freely with divinity, monasteries were usually located in secluded, often picturesque places, at the base of rocky slopes or at the edge of the valleys. In areas that are easier to defend or offer, in difficult times, the necessary shelter. Therefore, we will find them, at the place where different forms of reliefs meet, the plains with the hills or the hillocks with the mountains. There are also no monasteries on the shores of the lakes in the plain or in clearings in the extensive forests. (P. Cocean, 2006)

The spatial unit that represents the subject of our analysis belongs to the second region of national importance, occupied by edifices of this category, namely the Getic Subcarpathians, where the places of worship, run from east to west, beginning with Vieroși monastery (1573-1575) and continuing with the monasteries Negru Voda (from Camulung XIV century), Aninoasa (1677), Tutana (the end of the 16th century), Curtea de Argeș (1512-1517), Cotmeana (1377-1383), Bascovele (1695), Cozia (1388), Govora (1488), Bistrita (1492), Hurez (1697). The Monastery "From a Wood" (1635), Polovragi, Frasinei, and Tismana (16th century). (ibidem)

In the Northern part of the South-Muntenia Development Region, a number of 55 monasteries were inventoried at the end of our field investigation (the phenomenon was fluid in the last quarter of century given the fact that the building of new places of worship was constant). From these, 34 (Table no. 4) present an extremely rich heritage, detailed in the following.

1. Corbii de Piatra Monastery

Considered a true enigma, hidden as a cave in the mountain wall, the Corbii de Piatra Monastery is the only place with two holy functional altars on the same nave. Located in the village of Jgheaburi, Corbi commune, Arges county is the first monastery of nuns certified documentary in our country.

What allows establishing the exact date of the ensemble at the beginning of the XIV century, making the Corbii de Piatra the place of worship with the oldest painting in our country, is the quality of painting accompanied by stylistic features and documentary attestation. The ensemble of caves from the 14th century, the monastery was reestablished in 1512, during the reign of Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521).

The holy place has received the patronage “Dormition of the Virgin Mary” and was dedicated to Neagoe Basarab voivode (Figure no 10).

With the status of royal monastery, the place of worship is particularly valuable, specialists claiming to be the purest Byzantine tradition. Above the church, embedded in the rock, is the stone cross dating back to 1700, and in front of the church is the wooden chapel with the belfry built in 1890. In the Southern part there is the refectory (trapeze) of the monastery carved in stone and which used to serve as divan when the ruler of the country took part in the patronage of the monastery. The domain was the home of the Corvinsti family, who once arrived in Transylvania, wore the name Corvin-Huniade with possessions in Hunedoara region.

In the area are the ruins of Voicu's castle, the father of Ioan Corvin/Iancu de Hunedoara. Considered royal monastery of nuns, thanks to the worship of the church to the voivode, this was known in ancient times as the Meris Monastery.

Under the patronage of Bishop Iosif de Arges a series of arrangements were made and the sanctuary became a parish church. The construction is typologically related to the churches of Cappadocia (Turkey), which gives it a unique place in Romania.

Since divine services are done in the church only in summer time, in the rest of the time, the place of worship is open to visitors, being located just 400 meters from the center of Corbi, on the left bank of Doamnei River and about 35 km from Curtea de Arges.

Once visited the beautiful monastery, tourists can also admire and visit Ciocanu Monastery, Namaiesti Monastery, as well as the majestic places of worship and museums that impose in the urban landscape of Campulung, through an overwhelming architecture.



Fig. no 10: *Corbii de Piatra Monastery*
(Source: *Personal archive*)

2.2.2.3. Churches

Without any doubt, the churches constitute the most widely spread and richer attractive resource represented in the analysed regional space. The inventory operation of the 1367 churches has been a major desideratum of our approach, including the evolution of the religious phenomenon itself, knowing that the last decades have been characterized by a special multiplication of them.

The religious edifice dedicated for the celebration of the Christian cult –The Church, dates back to the early days of Christianity and represent the true picture of deep religious feeling which has always animated the Romanian people. Its evolution from an architectural point of view is similar to the evolution of the Christian community it served.

Referring to the building material of the religious edifices in the studied territory, we can acknowledge that the architecture of the churches was mainly influenced by the Christian tradition, to which were added the material possibilities of the community or those who built such edifices. As well

as existing local resources, which have been exploited with priority in such situations. The area studied by us is not an exception.

If the ones built by the voivodes were mostly buildings of stone and brick (there were also wooden voivode founded buildings, as the great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga demonstrated in 1929), their example was followed by the great dignitaries, then boyars, merchant guilds in towns and fairs, and only from the second half of the eighteenth century, wealthier village communities or landowners have started to build churches made out of concrete to the countryside. (ibidem)

Being extremely beautiful, the wooden churches (74 in number in the studied area and whose distribution is captured in Figure 30) belong to the vast field of traditional creation. They represent the continuity of an ancient tradition in constructive art, popular art, collective work, and thus largely anonymous, reflecting the socio-economic conditions of the past. Two examples: The church in Budeasa, founded by Pana Budisteanu (sec. al XVI-lea), moved to Glimbocu în 1883 and The Church of Catunul (Dambovita), built by the High Steward Eftimie in 1832. (I. Godea, 2013)

1. The „Kretulescu” Church in Targoviste

It is one of the most representative medieval religious buildings in the old town of Targoviste. It has a privileged position being located in the North of the city, near the Archbishopric residence. In fact, the church is now used as a chapel of it.

Although it was founded almost in the mid-seventeenth century (1638-1640) by the Great Vornic Dragomir (the Great Vornic was the highest ranking official in the *Sfatul Domnesc* (Princely Council)), the church is named after the boyars Kretulescu (relatives of Dragomir Vornic), those who have endeavored for more than 100 years to restore the valuable church (1757-1863). Another unique element of this church whose patrons are "Dormition of the Virgin Mary" and "Saint Antonie cel Mare" is the architecture with gothic influences, unusual for the South of the country. (Fig. nr. 31)

There are consistent indications that on the place of the present church there was a 14th-15th century church belonging to no one else than Mircea cel Batran voivode (or his son, Mihail) (M. Pacurariu, 2010).



Fig. no 31: *The Church Dormition of the Dormition Virgin Mary , Saint. Antonie cel Mare - „Cretulescu” from Targoviste*
(Source: monumenteromania.ro)

2 2.2.4. Roadside crucifixes and crosses of stone

Both discrete and imperative incidents along our roads, the small edifices that shelter the protective sign of the roadside crucifixes, have been for centuries responsible for remembering God.

Considered by specialists a prehistoric solar symbol converted into a Christian symbol, the Roadside crucifix is invested with the power to turn the place haunted by evil into a sanctified place, a place of worship and good advice for the people who have passed it by.

Marking, both physically and spiritually, the landscape of the Romanian village, the construction of roadside crucifixes has a rich tradition and has a strong comeback with new forms and meanings in recent years. (D. Petrescu, 2003)

The roadside crucifix definition in DEX: "troiță = big cross, wood or stone (adorned with paintings, sculptures, inscriptions, and sometimes framed by a small construction), placed at streets, besides fountains or places connected with an event." (D. Petrescu, 2003)

The habit of planting protective symbols in the places haunted by evil is lost in the beginning of humanity. The goddesses of darkness that reigned over the places of indecision, uncertainty, instability: crossroads, fountains, the place of violent deaths, etc, Thracians put them signs of light: solar symbols capable of casting darkness and helping mortals find the right path. (ibidem)

In Romanian mythology, the forces of Evil are endless and everywhere, trying every moment to harm humans. Therefore, the importance of the sign of the Cross in both physical and spiritual

framework of life becomes mandatory through the power that this sign has to destroy evil and remove all evil forces around it. (ibidem)

1.The tributaries of Campulung Muscel

A special case in the studied region is the Municipality of Campulung Muscel, a place with a remarkable density of tributaries and stone crosses of great historical, religious and even architectural value.

Campulung experienced long periods of prosperity, due to the privileges enjoyed by its inhabitants, as well as the heavy traffic of goods. The votive stone crosses are some of the most important medieval documents that exist in Campulung. They were built to commemorate various moments in the history of the city. (M.C. Enescu, 2011)

The number of votive crosses and their preservation in Campulung creates a singular case on the territory of Romania. Made of Albești numulitic limestone, still used in antiquity by the local craftsmen, the votive crosses were raised in the old neighborhoods of the city, and later moved with the development of the city. (Ibid)

There were 39 crosses, votive monuments dated between 1576 and 1868; some of which were destroyed in the nineteenth century. (Ibid)

The earliest of them dates back to June 21st 1576. Located in different neighborhoods of the city on the occasion of important moments for the local community, the historical crosses are written in the Romanian Cyrillic or Slavic Cyrillic, bearing the meanings and attributions of legal documents and were raised by the contribution the inhabitants of those. (Ibid)

Of the preserved ones, 16 are in good condition and can be seen in the present neighborhoods of Campulung, another 15 are around the churches, and one in the courtyard of the Municipal Museum of History and Art. (Ibid)

The Cross of Oath of 1674 is a cross that is embedded in the exterior wall of the house of the architect Dumitru Ionescu - Berechet, on the Negru - Voda Boulevard, at number 102. The second ceremonial cross, built in 1790, is located in the Central Square and is a copy of the premium. (Fig. no. 43)

The inscribed text on these monuments is composed of three parts. The first part is an invocation of the Holy Trinity and of the saint in memory of which they were raised, the second part is The Birth of the Lord, and in the third part are exposed the privileges of the relief of the townspeople, the privileges enjoyed by the town since the foundation of the Wallachia and which the princes of Wallachia renewed periodically or at the beginning of each reign. (Ibid)

There are also stone crosses marking the commercial roads that go from Campulung, such as those built during the rulers Mihai Viteazul (1593) and Constantin Brancoveanu (1697), beautifully ornamented with motifs that remind of folk tradition and even with Dacian tradition, transmitted from generation to generation. (Ibid)



Fig. no. 43: The Cross of Oath
(Source: muscelpedia.ro)

2.2.2.5. Religious edifices belonging to other religions

Unlike other regions of the country such as Transylvania, Banat, Crisana, Maramures or Dobrogea where the century-old ethnic interference generated a cultural landscape religious mosaic represented by a great variety of cults and consequently a composite structure of the religious heritage,

in the three counties of North Muntenia the Orthodox religion dominates in an overwhelming manner. As a result, the absolute majority of the cult and sepulchral edifices belong to this religion.

Having an exceptional status that confirms the rule, there are a limited number of edifices belonging to the Roman Catholic religion, as a result of the adherence to this cult of a fraction of the native population or of ethnic minorities, respectively of the synagogues, of the worship buildings belonging to the Jewish religion whose practitioners have drastically reduced numerically, for political and social reasons, after the World War II. Among these goals belonging to other religions, we mention:

1. St. Anthony of Padua, Campina (Roman Catholic)

The blast of the oil extraction industry in the Prahova area after the mid-19th century led to the formation of a significant Catholic community by the arrival of foreign specialists in Campina. Already in 1899, the Roman Catholic Parish of Campina is established, and 7 years later, the sanctuary of Saint Anthony's church celebrates on June 13th. Note that at the construction of the church, which took two years, was carried on by workers brought from Germany.

The masonry is of stone, being used quarry blocks from Albesti-Muscel and, for windows, stone of Rusciuk (Bulgaria).

The visitors attention is attracted by the baptisery from Carrara marble and the statues manufactured in Stufflesser Gardena workshops from Italy.

The church is described in 1973 by the National Commission of Historical Monuments as a "unique monument of originality and beauty," and Archbishop Raymond Netzhammer, in his work "Aus Rumanien", catalogs it as "the second architectural monument of Romania".

Next to Iulia Hasdeu Castle, the Memorial Museum Nicolae Grigorescu, the Cherry Fountain and the Griffin House are real attractions for tourists visiting the city of Campina. (Fig. no. 46)



Fig. no. 46: St. Anthony of Padua, Campina (Roman Catholic)
(Source: campinaturism.ro)

2.2.2.6. Mausoleums, cemeteries (necropolis), chapels, tumuli

In this category we include all the types of sepulchral edifices encountered as archaeological evidence, but also in the religious cultural landscape of the region (Cocean, David, 2014). We strongly underline that from the tourist point of view, their absolute majority has no attested attractive value, their burial function having rather inhibitory psychological connotations. There are, however, certain edifices in this category which, through the architectural lines (mausoleums, chapels), by the original burial practices (necropolis) or by the fame of the personalities who have found their place of residence there (certain cemeteries) it is an attraction point on the map of the localities that host them.

Mausoleums are buildings that have the main function of sheltering human remains, whether it is personalities or heroes of the people. Unlike religious places, religious cults are not practiced except

when they are buried. In addition to the symbols embodied by those who are buried here, the attractiveness of these objectives can also spring from their impressive, suggestive architecture.

The Mausoleum of Mateias (Valea Mare - Pravat, Arges) was built between 1928 and 1935 according to the plans of the architects Berechet and Balosiu in honor of the soldiers' heroes who sacrificed themselves in the battles of Campulungului during the World War I (1916).

The material used was the Albesti stone, unique in the country with its iris glow, the interior of which was painted by the artist Olga Greceanu. The original painting, depicting scenes from the wartime struggle, was replaced, due to degradation, with Murano-type mosaic in the 1980s, when the mausoleum had undergone several alterations. Thus, two museums, an esplanade and a walk-in terrace were built.

The Basorelief, an important element of the Mausoleum, is the work of the sculptor Radu Adrian, and evokes the fighting in that area.

Inside, the dome is surrounded by medallions of Romanian rulers and princes symbolizing the continuity and bravery of our people.

In the black marble crypt are the remains of 400 heroes, and the walls are loaded with the names of 2,300 heroes who fought and gave their lives for the country.

In the Mausoleum, in order to reestablish the atmosphere of those battles, a suite of dioramas is arranged.

The mausoleum is located in the commune of Valea Mare Pravat, on NR 73 Pitesti - Brasov, 15 km from Campulung Muscel. (Fig. no. 50)

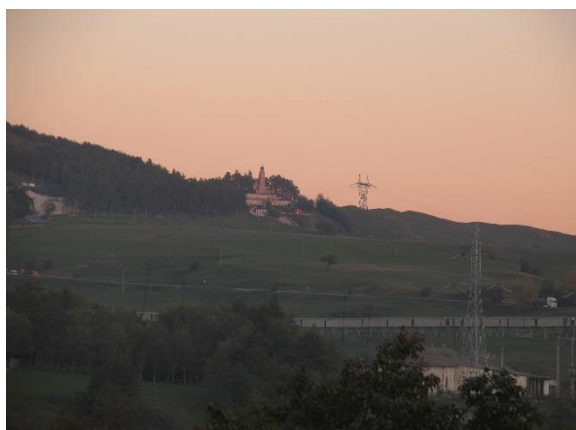


Fig. no. 50: *The Mausoleum of Mateias (Valea Mare - Pravat, Arges)*
(Source: Personal Archive)

2.2.3. Sacred sites and places

The attractiveness of many elements of the religious cultural landscape is due to their aura of sacred places (*sacred land, sacred space, holy land, etc.*). The sacred characteristic is conferred either by the presence of religious symbols with magical attributes, or by faith, traditionally established, in the beneficial force of tangency, even visual, with the relics of ecclesiastical personalities endowed with holy graces. For the absolute majority of tourists in this category, the direct perception of such places is synonymous with the full satisfaction of the spiritual need that determined the option of visiting them.

This category includes:

- edifices with miraculous icons;
- places of power and healing;
- the buildings with relics.

2.2.3.1. Miraculous icons

1. The miracle-making icon of the Mother of God at Namaiesti Monastery

The miracle-making icon was found in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, hidden from ancient times in a huge rock. Today she is at Namaiesti Monastery. (Fig. no. 51)

In the rock where the icon was found, a small church was excavated and erected. It is dedicated to the "Entry into the Church of the Mother of God" and in it, she sat with great love and honor the wonderful icon.

Nowadays, more and more sick and needy people come to the icon of the Mother of God to pray, turning back in relief and relieved.

The painting has been damaged early, but in 1798 the icon was framed in silver, and in 2004 it was restored with a painting attached to the cloth on the model of the Holy Mount Athos, being clothed in gold and beaten with precious stones (L. Cosmoiu, 2016).

Today, the miracle-making icon of Namaiesti helps all those who come to the monastery and worship with faith, being famous for healing of serious illnesses and other troubles.

For access, it is necessary to reach Campulung, and from there, just 5 km to the Northeast, and at an altitude of 800 m, there is the monastery with the famous miracle-working icon.



Fig. no. 51: The Miracle-Making Icon of the Mother of God, Namaiest Monastery
(Source: ortodoxia.rol.ro)

2.2.3.2. Places of power and healing

1. Healing place - Ialomita Cave Monastery

In a special place of the Ialomita Cave Monastery, at a depth of 200 m, there is a stone called the Stone of the Altar, where, traditionally, the hermits did the holy ones.

The place of worship has also gained fame, and thanks to this healing, sacred and historic place, a spectacular proof of the people's faith in God. It is said that this place has healing powers for any disease.

The healing place at the Ialomita Cave Monastery is a target of the permanent pilgrimages of the Romanian faithful, who can reach the road Bucharest - Sinaia (NR 71 towards Targoviste) - Cuibul Dorului Chalet - Dichiului Saddle - Bolboci - Diana - Padina - Ialomita Cave.

2.2.3.3. Relics in places of religious worship

Relics are bones, remains of the body of a saint, clothing or other objects of the saints or ancestors of a people, or objects that served to martyrdom of those who were proclaimed holy. (Wikipedia.org)

The word "relics" is primarily used in the same meaning as the Latin *reliquia* or the Greek *lipsana*, which simply means "earthly remains". Our word "mosci" (moaste) comes from the musk root (strength), which for man is just the skeleton, that inner back that holds the whole body. (crestinortodox.ro)

Glorification of the relics of a saint is done regardless of the fact that his body rotted or not. The saint is glorified for his life and for the heavenly help he shows to men both in the time of life and after death. And the relics are the earthly remains of a holy man, whether they are whole bodies, or bones, and even dust and ashes. (Ibid)

In our area of interest are almost 90 remains of saints of the Orthodox Church. The monasteries who are remarkable: Negru-Voda (Campulung-Muscel), Cetatua, Robaia, Holy Trinity (Pitesti), Ghighiu, Jercalai, Pissiota.

The relics of Saint Filofteia (celebrated on December 7th) are in the Church of the Chapel of Curtea de Arges Monastery. (Fig. no. 56)

For Saint Nicolae (celebrated on December 6th), the relic icon with its relics is on the altar table of the "Saint Hierarch Calinic of Cernica" Chapel at the Eparchial Center in Curtea de Arges. She is also appointed for worship in Mioveni, Arges County (15 km from Pitesti), as well as in the churches "Saint Apostles Petre and Paul" and "The Three Holy Hierarchs". (Bibmet.ro)



Fig. no. 56: The relics of St. Filofteia
(Source: doxologia.ro)

2.2.4. Religious manifestations with attractive features

Religious edifices have a degree of attractiveness in themselves (architecture, patrimony, surroundings, etc.), but at the general level of attractiveness, the activities that take place within them are decisive. Whether it's activities carried out in certain days of the year (feasts, important holidays in the Christian calendar, sanctification or resurrection of places, canonization, etc.), whether they are continuous activities throughout the year (pilgrimages to icons wonders or relics), religious manifestations are highly appreciated by tourists (especially by the faithful) and can constitute an important source of tourist development of the respective places, but also of the areas in which they are located. Of the religious manifestations, those with a high potential are:

- pilgrimages
- devotion days
- sanctification of churches

2.2.4.1. Pilgrimage

Perhaps the oldest form of tourism ever practiced in the world is the pilgrimage. The origins of this religious phenomenon are lost in time, as it manifests itself almost on the scale of the entire planet.

By pilgrimage it is understand that journey which has the purpose of a holy place that crowds of travelers, called pilgrims, worship him.

Each religion has holy destinations that are visited annually by tens of millions of pilgrims: Rome, Lourdes, Fatima, Czestochowa for Christians, Benares for Hindus, Mecca and Medina for Muslims, etc.

According to *Dr. Lucretia Vasilescu*, the reasons that people have for pilgrimage are the following: to see and to know, to pray, to worship and to worship, to make a covenant, to spend the rest of their lives in a holy place, to obtain a favor.

In Romania, almost all pilgrimages are related to the Orthodox world and have important events of this faith in the forefront: Dormition of the Virgin (August 15th), Nativity of the Mother of God (September 8th), Ascension of the Holy Cross (September 14th), Spring of Healing, feast (Saint Parascheva - October 14th, Saint Nicholas - December 6th , Saint Dumitru - October 26th, Saint Gheorghe - April 23th, Saint Filofteia, etc.).

The national pilgrimages in Iasi, Saint Parascheva, from Prislop, Father Arsenie Boca (November 28th) and Nicula Monastery (Cluj) are celebrated as a national importance, on the occasion of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims take part in these events, with

a duration of one to three days. In the Catholic world, there are pilgrimages from Șumuleu-Ciuc, Harghita (Pentecost), Cacica, Suceava (Dormition of the Virgin Mary, August 15th), Maria RaRNA Basilica, Arad (Birth of the Virgin Mary, September 8th).

In the studied region, **the pilgrimage from Curtea de Arges Monastery** on December 7th (Saint Filoftea) and on August 15th (Dormition of the Virgin) is noted. Every time from the above, the relics of Saint Filoftea are exposed in the canopy in front of the monastery, and in front of them tens of thousands of pilgrims are getting through.

It is worth mentioning that the pilgrimage in December begins as early as 6th (St. Nicolae Feast), and this is due to the fact that here are also the parts of the relics of this saint. Developed during the summer season, the pilgrimage to St. Mary (the monastery's patronage) benefits from the presence of a large number of visitors who spend their holidays in this particularly attractive area for tourists who appreciate mountain tourism or agritourism. Also, during this period in Curtea de Arges is held the Fair of Craftsmen in which artisans from all over the country sell their own ceramics products such as wood, flowers, textiles, etc.

As the participants in these pilgrimages come from all over the country, the national character of the events at Curtea de Arges can be stated.

Besides these occasions when occasional pilgrimages take place, because the monastery is one of the most important religious buildings in the country and is present in all travel agency offers, we can say that there is a permanent dimension to the pilgrims' presence. From the estimates made by representatives of Argeș and Muscel Archdiocese, the annual number of visitors to this objective ranges from 250,000 to 300,000, with higher values in the summer season.

A feast that has a remarkable dynamism in recent years is **the Feast of Saint Nifon (August 11th)** taking place in Targoviste. Relatively new, this holiday gathers more visitors from year to year, with around 20,000 pilgrims present in 2017. They participate, together with the high prelates of the Romanian Orthodox Church at the Divine Liturgy, and then worship the relics of Saint Nifon, Patriarch of Constantinople and Metropolitan of Wallachia (end of the 15th century - beginning of the XVIth century).

As a special note in the ceremonies, it has become a traditional award by the hierarchs of pupils and teachers in Dambovita who have earned results at school conferences and Olympiads.

Although so far this reverberation has only been found in the soul and feelings of the faithful from Dambovita, there are important prerequisites that the impact of the manifestation should go beyond the borders of the county and soon become a regional pilgrimage.

The Spring of Healing (celebrated on the first Friday after the Holy Easter) is the occasion of another important pilgrimage in Dambovita County. This is **the pilgrimage from the Nucet Monastery**, where the Healing Fountain is. There is the tradition that pilgrims who come here and drink sanctified water from this fountain will be healed of various diseases. On this occasion, between 5,000 and 10,000 pilgrims attend the Divine Liturgy, hosted by hierarchs of places, and go to the Healing Fountain in a backyard near the monastery. The vast majority of them come from the localities of Dambovita County, very few pilgrims from other counties being signaled here. However, with better promotion and closer collaboration between archbishops, there is a chance that the pilgrimage will have a regional character. Additionally, the same day is celebrated the day of Nucet commune, an opportunity for organizing fairs and artistic events that can help to increase the number of visitors.

The monastery is a common destination for groups of religious tourists also in other days of the year.

The Spring of Healing is also the feast of a significant **pilgrimage to the Ghighiu Monastery** (Prahova County). Thousands of pilgrims arrive here to participate in the activities of the day of the feast, to worship the miracle-making icon of the Virgin Mary (Siriaca) and to drink water from the spring of the monastery's yard, water believed to be the healer of the diseases of the soul and body.

Its location just 60 km from Bucharest and only 5 km from Ploiesti make this monastery a very accessible destination for pilgrims in the area, but many pilgrims also arrive from all over the country. Significant values of the number of pilgrims are also recorded on the Orthodox feast days, which take place in the foreground of the Virgin Mary.

Ghighiu Monastery is a constant presence throughout the year in the itineraries of the pilgrims, both those from the groups organized by the secular or church travel agencies, as well as those who travel on their own. The presence in the area and other places appreciated by believers (Pissiota Monastery, Crasna Monastery, Zamfira Monastery, Suzana Monastery, etc.) is an additional argument for the attractiveness of this monastery among the pilgrims.

On September 14th, on the day of the Ascension of the Holy Cross, an important **pilgrimage takes place at the Caraiman Monastery** (Busteni, Prahova County). It is the day of the patronage of this wonderful monastic settlement located at the foot of the Bucegi, "Monk Hermitage", as it was known in the early 2000s, and appeared relatively recently in the landscape of Romanian Orthodoxy.

In the last years of the twentieth century, Father Gherontie Puiu laid the foundations of this monastery, following a vision that prompted him to look for a strand of storm with six branches, in the trunk of which the image of the Mother of Precista (*the Monastery of the Ascension of the Holy Cross Caraiman, 2016*).

In less than 20 years, the monastery has become one of the most attractive places for both pilgrims and tourists on the Prahova Valley.

On the occasion of the celebration of the feast, thousands of pilgrims gather all over the country.

The existence of an important base of accommodation (the monastery has a complex with 100 accommodation places) contributes significantly to the extension of the pilgrims who stay there, which spend an average of 2-3 days in the monastery complex Busteni.

The smaller monasteries, however, are marked by the pilgrimages that take place at the following monasteries: Namaiești Monastery (especially the Spring of Healing, celebrations related to the Mother of God, but also throughout the year), Crasna Monastery, Zamfira Monastery, Pissiota Monastery, Viforata Monastery, Dealu Monastery, cave monasteries Corbii de Piatra and Cetatieni, Cotmeana Monastery, etc.

In general, all monasteries with miracles or relics of the saints in the patrimony have the presence of pilgrims almost throughout the year. They arrive here through the travel agencies of the Romanian Orthodox Church through groups of parishes, archbishops or bishops or on they own.

2.2.4.2. Devotion Days

"Devotion Days" are religious manifestations that, for a short period of time, generally one day, concentrate an appreciable number of visitors animated by godly feelings. They fit in an order established and managed by church authorities. Thus, any place of Orthodox worship bears the name of a royal feast, a feast of the Mother of God or a saint. We hear or talk about, for example, the Holy Trinity Church, the Ascension Church, the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God or the Church of St. Nicolae or the churches of other saints.

This means that the churches are placed under the patronage of these saints, bearing their name. This saint is called a Slavonic term "hram" and the church receives it with the moment of sanctification of the place on which it is to be built and, especially, at the moment of its sanctification. This holy work is known by the name of "tarnosire"; the berth is reserved only for the bishop, the priests being incapable of doing it. (N. Necula, 1996)

The emergence of "hram" is synonymous with the past of ages and the natural evolution of Christian religion. Right from the beginnings of Christianity, the faithful surrounded with love, reverence and reverence the heroes of faith, that is, their saints. From the history of the Christian Church's life and activity, we know that in the first centuries, when Christianity appeared as a new religion in the Roman Empire, the greatest number of saints was recorded. (Ibid)

Most churches have St. Nicolae as spiritual patron (64), which is celebrated on December 6th. Another 60 churches are dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin (August 15th), the Archangels Mihail and Gavril (November 8th) - 25, Saint Parascheva (October 14th) - 23, etc. In Annex no. 3 are the most representative 322 churches in the studied area (more than two centuries old) and their patronage. From these, 66 have celebrations, the date of which varies by Easter or other saints.

The monasteries and hermitages are dedicated to a feast related to the Mother of God: The Dormition of the Virgin (August 15th) - 6 and the Entry into the Church of Our Lady (November 21th) - 5. St. Ioan Botazatorul (January 7th) - 4, St. Nicolae (December 6th) - 4 and St. Gheorghe (April 23th) - 3 are among the other patrons of other monasteries and hermitages. (Fig. no. 58), (The Historical Atlas of Monasteries and Huts in Romania: XI-XXI, 2010)

2.2.4.3. Sanctification (consecration) or resanctification of a church

One of the most important, old and solemn Orthodox religious manifestations is that of sanctification of a place of worship or its consecration. The ritual is full of symbols, the most important of which is that of the descent of the Holy Spirit of Christ on the Apostles and is accomplished after the building or restoration of a religious edifice. That's why attending a sanctification service is an important event in the life of Orthodox Christians.

The service usually held by the hierarch of the place (archbishop or bishop) takes place outside, in the presence of the Christian community, but also of pilgrims from other localities. After the commencement of this first part begins the ritual of the surrounding church, during which three stops are made, one on each side, where the walls of sanctified water and the Holy Mir are splashed and short liturgical passages are read.

The next step is the sanctification of the altar and of the Holy Mass, during which the parts of the relics of a saint and the sanctification chrism are placed at the foot of the table. The table is washed with fragrances and anointed with ointment, then the archival seal is placed and the Holy Mass is being decorated.

All this is past, then the church is consecrated and, in the interior, and those present are blessed and sprinkled with Holy Water, a symbol of the good grace of the Holy Spirit.

After the end of the religious service, the attendees pass through the altar, this being one of the few occasions when Christians are allowed to do so. The parts of the fabric that adorned the Holy Mass and with which it was erased are divided among believers. These are called "tarnoseli", and the faithful keep them with great care, believing that they are useful in various situations when they ask for divine help. Such events are relatively rare and communities are mobilizing to participate in them.

2.3. Assessing the Attractive Religious Potential

One of the most challenging tasks in a tourism analysis work is to measure how attractive the objectives are. This approach is useful both for tourists (to make an informed decision regarding the visitation), tour operators (for inclusion of the target in different tourist packages), economic agents in tourism (for initiation or development of tourist investments in the area), local public administration (to include the area in various development projects, especially infrastructure) and, last but not least, the academic and academic environment (for studies, analyzes and forecasts).

The methodology I propose is based on the formula developed by Cocean P. (1984), which takes into account four broad criteria: the degree of uniqueness, the attractive valences, the length of stay and the value index. In order to make the methodology as objective as possible, we have introduced a series of evaluation sub-criteria, taking into account as many of the situations that occur in the field and contributing to a more accurate assessment of reality.

CHAPTER 3. THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Activities in the field of tourism constitute an integrated system consisting of the following components: tourist potential, tourism infrastructure, tourist flow, tourism product and tourist market (Cocean P., 1996).

The tourism phenomenon includes all the recreation motivations and activities carried out in a given territory at a specified time. Thus, there are prefigured the three main tourism entities, namely: attractive resources, tourism infrastructure and tourism flow (Contiu, H.V., 2012) The entire tourist activity is limited to directing the flows of people towards the objectives with attractive functions, the operation during which the tourist product is consumed and the *tourism infrastructure elements* are being used.

Transport infrastructure is overwhelmingly important because the movement is fundamental in most human activities.

Tourism, as a branch of economy, is substantially influenced by this infrastructure.

The problem becomes even more worse for religious tourism knowing that a significant part of the religious objectives are located in more isolated areas, with lower access possibilities.

The studied area consists of three important counties of the South-Muntenia Development Region and even of the country. This area comprises both a significant mountainous area, partly northward, and extensive grassland in the Southern part. Only the presence of a vast mountain area makes the density of transport routes diminished as against the national average, especially in terms of rail transport.

The proximity to Bucharest (the administrative capitals of the three counties are placed at an equal distance from the capital of the country), the IVth Pan-European corridor route, the presence of other major cities nearby (Brasov, Sibiu, Buzau, Ramnicu Valcea), but also of the main aerial gates of the country - Bucharest International Airport - Otopeni, are solid arguments for the existence of an important road and rail infrastructure.

Infrastructure sums up all the assets and means by which the attractive resources of a territory are exploited.

According to some studies, the infrastructure is assimilated to the technical-material basis, being included in the tourist offer. Its primary function is to meet demand by endowments and specific services.

The religious tourism infrastructure, analyzed in this study, includes:

1. Access ways
2. Tourist accommodation infrastructure
3. Facilities related to the promotion and practicing of the tourism subtype (museums, collections, etc.)

3.1. Ways of acces

It is an indispensable accessory to practice tourist activities, facilitating the direct contact of the visitor with the objective turned into motivation of his or her travel option. Even by reducing pedestrian transport, "per pedes" the need for access paths is imperative, being claimed by attributes such as visitor safety, ease of approach to the goal, protection of the adjacent landscape, etc. As modern tourism involves the use of a wide range of means of locomotion, the presence of transport modes specific to each means turns into an indispensable condition for the progress and affirmation of the respective activities. Two main types of access roads, namely road and rail, are characteristic of the studied region.

3.1.1 Road access ways

The means of road transport (car, coach, motorcycle, moped, bicycle) are the main vector of regional tourism transport. For their good progress it is necessary to have a network of roads that will

ensure the connection between the main economic and tourist centers in the three counties, as well as the connection with other important cities of the country, especially with Bucharest.

Although the Carpathian Mountain chain acts as a barrier in the path of easy connectivity with Transylvania, the studied territory benefits from four transport corridors that facilitate this communication: Prahova Valley, Oltului Valley, Rucar-Bran and Transfagarasan.

With a public road density of 49.2 km/100 km² the studied area exceeds considerably the South-Muntenia Development Region (37.6 km/100 km²) and Romania in its entirety (36.1 km / 100 km²) (INS, 2017).

From the point of view of accessibility to the main tourist-religious objectives, this is satisfactory, with all centers benefiting from a good network of public roads.

However, in the perspective of the tourist circuits organization, especially the roads between the old capitals of Wallachia (Targoviste - Campulung Muscel and Campulung Muscel - Curtea de Arges require urgent modernization.

The access from Bucharest to the residences of the three counties is a good one, both to Ploiesti and to Pitesti, achieving the highway (Fig. no. 60).

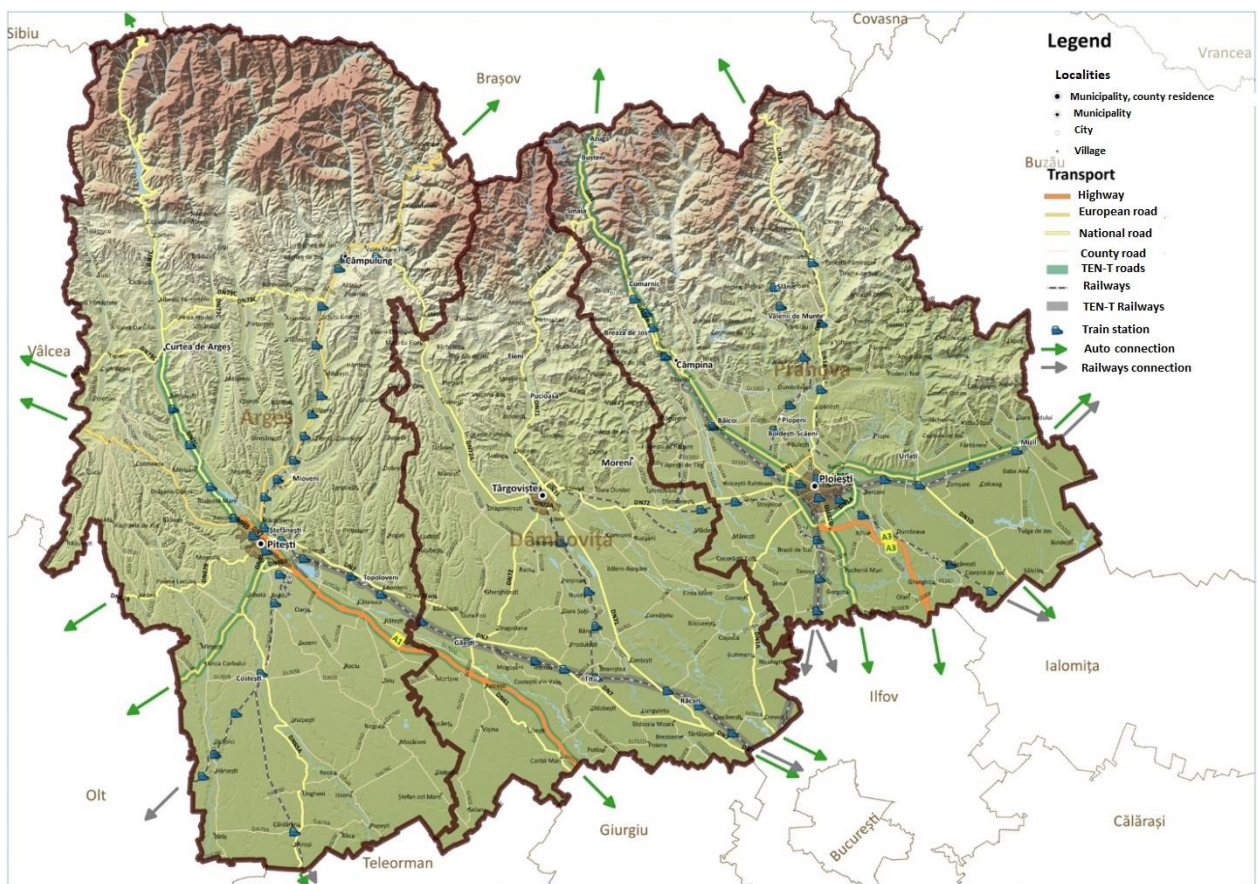


Fig. no. 60: The main network of road and rail ways

3.1.2 The railways transport

If by the end of the 80's the railways transport has experienced a period of prosperity, the change in the political-economic-social realities produced by the Revolution of December 1989, marked the start of the decline in rail transport. The state of wear of the railways and the frail intervention for their maintenance were important causes of the continuous decrease in the speed of travel, the number of trains and the size of the trainset, all of which have the consequence to increase the unattractiveness of this type of transport.

However, given the European Commission's encouragement to develop less polluting transport routes starting with the early 2000's, significant sums have been allocated, especially from European funds, to modernize railways. Also, the disappearance of the state monopoly in the transport activity led to the emergence of private competitors, the quality of the services being somewhat revived.

In the studied area there are two railway thoroughfares: the Thoroughfare 300 (Bucharest - Ploiesti - Brasov - Oradea - Hungary), double electrified line segment of Pan-European Corridor IV and the Thoroughfare 500 (Bucharest - Ploiesti - Vicsani - Ukraine).

As secondary lines we mention: line 901 (Bucharest - Pitesti), line 904 (Titu - Petrosita), line 701 (Ploiesti - Tandarei), all non - electrified double lines.

3.1.3. Special transports are tele ski, cable cars and tele gondola, which belong to the mountain resorts. They address so overwhelming to leisure tourism practitioners and not to the religious one. There are, however, for the cable cars of the Sinaia and Busteni resorts, targeting the Bucegi plateau, a significant percentage of tourists who access them to reach the Ialomita Cave and to visit the homonymous monastery. The tele gondola line Sinaia – Altitude 1400 – Altitude 2000 is 4175m long and overlaps an 1190m level difference and the Busteni-Babele cable car is 4350m long and a 1237m level difference. It extends with a segment to the Ialomita Cave, making it possible to visit it.

3.2. Tourist accommodation infrastructure

It forms together with the attractive resources and transport routes, the fundamental vectors that define tourism as economic and social human activity (Cocean P., 1996).

Between the introduction of tourist objectives and the construction of public accommodation and food facilities, there is an obvious parallelism, a reciprocal conditioning. They therefore appear as a strict result of the arranging process and highlighting the various objectives.

The typology of the accommodation bases has different criteria. In defining types, the following parameters are taken into account: size, comfort, functionality, usage period, type of tourism that I serve, etc. For the religious tourism from Arges, Dambovita and Prahova counties, two major groups of accommodation base are detached, namely:

- The general tourist accommodation base
- The specific accommodation base.

3.2.1. The general tourist accommodation base

It is made up of all accommodation units in the studied region that can be accessed by the entire mass of visitors, regardless of the type of tourism they practice: recreational, curative or cultural-religious. According to previous classifications (Cocean P., 1996; Contiu HV, 2012), it consists of the *main accommodation base* where the tourist attributes are dominant (hotels, motels, villas, cottages, inns and tourist stops) and *secondary accommodation base*, integrated in the temporary tourist field and at a modest level of functionality (shelters and refuges, pensions, camping and camps).

For both categories, the main attribute is the *accommodation capacity*, which makes it possible to evaluate the utilization rate and, ultimately, its economic profitability. It expresses the receptivity degree of the infrastructure to the tourist demand which, for a given unit and at a given time is dimensioning it. We meet two expressions of this parameter, namely the existing accommodation capacity (E_{ac}) and the accommodation capacity used (U_{ac}).

The existing accommodation capacity is equal to the number of beds available for overnight stays in one year and is obtained from the product:

$$E_{ac} = N_{bp} \times 365$$

The used accommodation capacity represents the fraction used entirely from the existing accommodation capacity.

The coefficient of use of a base is expressed by reporting overnight stays of one year to existing accommodation capacity.

$$Cu = \frac{Uac}{Eac} \times 100$$

Worldwide, the use of the equipment is between 50-60%. High percentages are characteristic to hotels in urban centers and accommodation units in permanent tourism resorts. In the case of camping or chalets, the values are minimal (ibidem).

In order to highlight this parameter in the studied region, we consider a brief insight into the tourist accommodation infrastructure at national and South-Muntenia Development Region level.

Thus, at national level, the distribution of the various types of accommodation units in the territory reveals a maximum concentration of hotels on the Seaside, in the major cities (Bucharest, Cluj Napoca, Timisoara, Iasi, Brasov) and in some resorts (Baile Herculane, Poiana Brasov, Baile Felix, Sangeorz Bai, Calimanesti - Caciulata). The villas predominate in the traditional resorts (Vatra Dornei, Sinaia, Predeal, Busteni) and the chalets in the mountainous and hilly area. The inns are along the traditional roads (with a preferential location in the trenches and large branches), while camping have grown out of the periphery of major cities (where they absorb the peak of seasonal demand) or more demanding resorts (Cocean, P., 2010).

Romanian tourism has seen an effervescent development between 1964 and 1989 when it builds a diversified infrastructure, consisting of 3,330 accommodation units (784 hotels and motels, 1,464 villas, 215 cottages, 213 camping, 174 camps and 115 inns, 365 other facilities) which held together 418,944 seats. From this maximum inflection point, there is a permanent reduction in accommodation capacity (314,296 seats in 1991, 289,539 seats in 1995 and 282,000 in 2002). After 2002, we notice a slight recovery, in 2008 the number of accommodation places reached over 296,000 (ibidem), and in 2016 to 328,888 (INSSE).

In terms of comfort, it predominates the 2-3 star units with less competitive facilities and services.

At the same time, there are internal changes in the structure of the tourist units, the numerical increase of the hotels and the numerical reduction of the other traditional bases, the most drastic being recorded by the inns and villas. The cause must be sought in the transformation of many bases previously classified as inns, villas or cottages into hotels or motels (and due to the more appealing "name"). (Ibidem).

However the share of pensions grew faster, an element of infrastructure that did not exist before 1989, currently reaching, at least in numerical terms, to prevail in the structure of accommodation establishments at national level. (Ibidem)

Reported across the country, the percentage of accommodation places belonging to the pensions outnumbers those of traditional bases such as villas, chalets or inns, located immediately in the vicinity of hotels. In some resorts, the report is even reversed, in Busteni the pensions have 1,012 accommodation places compared to 781 hotels, and in Azuga 333 compared to 251 etc. (Ibidem)

In the South-Muntenia Development Region, the three counties benefit from a significant accommodation base. Regarding the functionality of these accommodation bases, it is worth mentioning that most of them were built between 1960 and 1980 and some of them are in an advanced state of physical degradation. Others have been rehabilitated on Phare, Sapard or Structural Funds.

In terms of tourism investments in the last decade, they have been concentrated mainly on the construction and rehabilitation of accommodation units located in the mountain area. The great appeal of investors for this area is due in particular to the high demand for accommodation in mountain resorts, which are the main destinations for weekend and mountain tourism, not only for tourists from these counties, but also for those around, especially in Bucharest (South-Muntenia RDP 2014-2020, 2014).

From the synthetic table no. 13, Fig. no. 61 and Fig. no. 62, dedicated to all categories of accommodation establishments with a general function in the three counties, it can be noted the numerical net predominance of the pensions (436 units), followed by the rented rooms (156), the hotels (135) and the villas (107). Bungalows (3) and camping (9) are poorly represented numerically.

Table no. 13: Accommodation structures in the studied area by degrees of comfort

Accommodation category type	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	Total
Hotels	8	39	70	16	2	135
Motels	2	13	10	0	0	25
Hostels	5	13	9	0	0	27
Cottage	6	11	13	0	0	30
Villas	4	27	54	14	8	107
Pensions	4	124	245	57	6	436
Apartment / Room – rented	10	82	63	1	0	156
Camping	1	6	2	0	0	9
Bungalows	0	1	2	0	0	3
TOTAL	40	316	468	88	16	928

(Source: National Authority of Tourism, 2015)

3.2.2 The specific accommodation base

An alternative that is increasingly sought and appreciated by the cultural-religious tourism practitioners is the accommodation in the capacities of the places of worship. This solution has the following advantages: proximity to the place of worship, the possibility of knowing in depth for a period of several days or weeks the monastic life of the respective place, spending a quiet holiday and, last but not least, lower prices than in the usual tourist network.

More and more monasteries have resorted to this solution, some of them having real complexes of accommodation (Busteni - 100 seats, Ialomita Cave - 50 seats, Cheia - 50 seats, Suzana - 50 seats, Cotmeana - 48 seats, etc.). A total of just over 700 accommodation places are in the monasteries of the three studied counties, 300 in Arges and Prahova and 100 in Dambovita.

Unlike the accommodation centers with general addressability, the accommodation units belonging to the places of worship, especially the monasteries, are in most cases individualized by their modest comfort, by means of strictly necessary facilities for a short stay, by the exploitation regime subjected to restrictions behavioral, well-known and respected by the great mass of pilgrims.

From the analysis of the location of the tourist accommodation capacities near the places of worship with tourist potential (Fig. 67) there is a good coverage of the territory and a good access from these accommodation capacities to the mentioned tourist objectives.

Only in the South of Arges and Dambovita counties the accommodation capacity is lower, but the distance of 50 km from the county residences makes from an inconvenient problem one more surmountable for those who intend to visit the cultural-religious objectives in these areas.

3.3. Promotion and practice facilities

The attractive offer of religious tourism includes, besides the edifice of worship, the places and sacred places or manifestations with traditional religious content (pilgrimages, churches and consecrations) and a number of other elements that diversify the spectrum of motivations and extend the length of stay in a given location.

Such items, such as museums and church collections, have frequently associated shopping points with religious content that is established in the broad category of "souvenirs" sought by the absolute majority of tourists (icons, church books, albums, guides, articles craftsmanship, etc.). Due to their increasing number and attractive function, museums prove to be targets of tourist interest, which justifies their mentioning in the following.

3.3.1. Ecclesiastical museums

Some of the monastic settlements in the studied area have small museums. The reasons that have led to this decision are diverse: the desire to provide optimum conditions for a range of mobile heritage assets, the desire to increase the tourist attractiveness of the goal, etc. The church museums thus become edifications with a certain cultural function, sheltering specific mobile values belonging to different epochs and authors.

1. The Brebu Monastery Museum

Arranged in the Royal House of the ensemble whose construction was begun during the time of Matei Basarab and was completed by Constantin Brancoveanu, the museum is a section of the Prahova History and Archeology Museum.

Among the most valuable exhibits we can mention: the Bucharest Bible (1688), the masterpiece of Metropolitan Dosoftei and Antim Ivireanul, Pravila from Govora (1640), the Targeting of the Printed Law in Targoviste in 1652.

The collection is complemented by many pieces of art: old icons, jewels and vintage jewelry, boyish clothing.

The museum faithfully reflects the period of economic, social and cultural flowering that they have impressed by the great rulers Matei Basarab and Constantin Brancoveanu. Visit schedule: Daily 9 to 17, closed Monday.

CHAPTER. 4. TOURIST TRAFFIC IN SACRED SPACES AND PLACES

The direct expression of the level of development achieved by the religious tourism in the approached region is given by the magnitude of the related tourist flows, respectively by the intensity of the tourist traffic having as target the objectives of the church patrimony.

However, there are great difficulties in assessing this parameter, obstacles caused by the lack of a rigorous matrix that could make the difference in a quantitative way between the general tourist flow and the most religious one. A cathedral or monastery in the given region, visited both by ordinary tourists, eager to meet cultural needs as well as pilgrims, oriented exclusively to religious revelations, records at most the number of visitors and not the notable differences, their options. As a result, we consider useful as a reference element an outline of the general coordinates of the tourist traffic in the three counties, followed by an exclusive focus on several case studies belonging to the religious area. In this way we consider that differences and possible discrepancies between tourism as a general phenomenon and religious tourism as a particular aspect, can be illustrated more convincingly.

4.1. Regional touristic traffic

According to the National Institute of Statistics, 809,020 tourists arrived in the studied area (Arges, Dambovita and Prahova counties in 2016), which means 90% of the tourists arrived in the entire South Muntenia Development Region (88,7 % of Romanian tourists and 92.7% of foreign tourists). Between the three counties Prahova County has the largest share, with 62.5% of the total arrivals in the studied area, and with over 56% of the total development region. (*Table no. 23*).

Table no. 23: *Touristic traffic, on different categories in 2016*

Region	TOTAL	Hotels	Hostels	Motels	Inns	Villas	Chalets	Pensions	Agro pensions	Camping camps	Tourist stops	Bungalows	Camps	Tourist houses	
South-Muntenia	TOTAL	906749	597163	27407	43642	1477	36822	26251	96491	66142	1694	808	3133	5124	595
	ROMANIAN	778556	484738	26977	40986	1477	33561	25305	90244	63952	1694	798	3020	5121	593
	FOREIGN	128193	112425	430	2656	0	3171	946	6247	2190	0	10	113	3	2
ARGES	TOTAL	206567	112150	2261	5530	0	3712	14494	29830	34917	0	466	316	2296	595
	ROMANIAN	168359	79014	2252	5069	0	3678	13893	27444	33404	0	456	260	2296	593
	FOREIGN	38208	33136	9	461	0	34	601	2386	1513	0	10	56	0	2
DAMBOVITA	TOTAL	96638	61483	3551	1855	478	2533	4317	4956	16200	1265	0	0	0	0
	ROMANIAN	89703	55077	3476	1808	478	2533	4264	4883	15919	1265	0	0	0	0
	FOREIGN	6935	6406	75	47	0	0	53	73	281	0	0	0	0	0
PRAHOVA	TOTAL	505815	367838	10346	15580	0	28994	7404	58274	14094	429	342	0	2514	0
	ROMANIAN	432129	302012	10235	14948	0	26127	7112	54647	13763	429	342	0	2514	0
	FOREIGN	73686	65826	111	632	0	2867	292	3627	331	0	0	0	0	0
STUDIED AREA	TOTAL	809020	541471	16158	22965	478	35239	26215	93060	65211	1694	808	316	4810	595
	ROMANIAN	690191	436103	15963	21825	478	32338	25269	86974	63086	1694	798	260	4810	593
	FOREIGN	118829	105368	195	1140	0	2901	946	6086	2125	0	10	56	0	2

(Source: *INSSE*)

The ratio of Romanian and foreign tourists is net in favor of the Romanians, only 18.5% in Arges county, 14.6% in Prahova county and 7.2% in Dambovita county coming from abroad, while the average of the South Muntenia region is 14.1%.

More than two-thirds (67%) of the arrived tourists preferred to accommodate the hotels in the area, namely: 63.2% of the Romanian tourists and 88.7% of the foreign tourists (*Table no. 23*). In the counties, the share of foreign tourists who stayed at hotels is 86.7% in Arges county, 92.4% in Dambovita county and 89% in Prahova county. These high values clearly outline the options that foreign tourists have in terms of quality standards. Also, given the location of hotels predominantly in urban areas, but also the relatively short average duration of stay (2.2 nights/arrival), we can say that most foreigners practice business tourism in the studied area, here being located important companies with foreign participation (Arctic, Erdemir, Otelinox, ASO Cromsteel, ELJ Automotive, Automobile Dacia, Lisa Draxelmaier, Lear Corporation, Yazaki, Unilever, Petrotel Conpet etc). Other purposes of the trip include: participation in congresses, seminars, symposiums, sports competitions, medical tourism and cultural tourism.

The next category of accommodation structure for tourists is that of pensions (including agro-tourism), 20% of them opting for them (22% of Romanians and only 7% of foreigners). If at the level

of South Muntenia development region the average of this indicator is 18%, the counties in the studied area register the following shares: 14.3% in Prahova, 22% in Dambovita and 31.3% in Arges.

With nearly 62,000 arrivals (7.5% of their total), villas and chalets are the third choice of accommodation in the studied area. And here the overwhelming majority is represented by the Romanians, only 6.3% of the foreigners being registered within these accommodation structures.

The rest of the accommodation structures (motels, hostels, camping camps, etc.) have modest shares in tourists' options, totaling around 5%.

4.2. Seasonality of touristic traffic

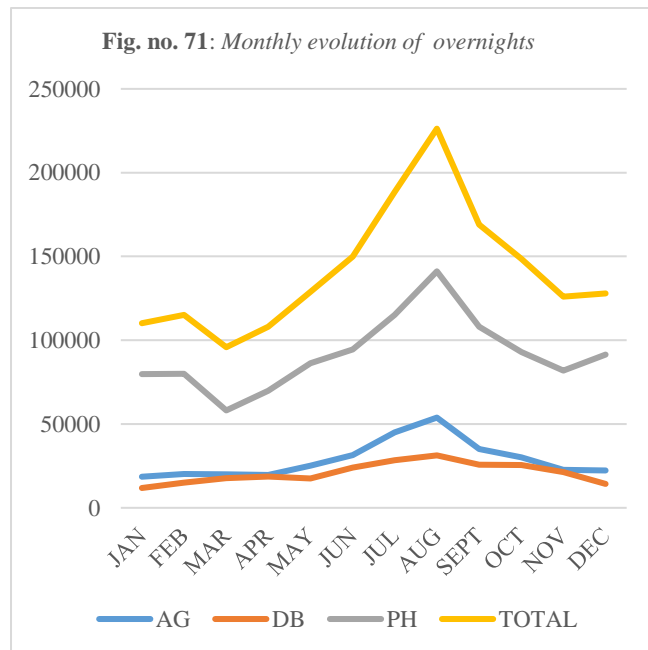
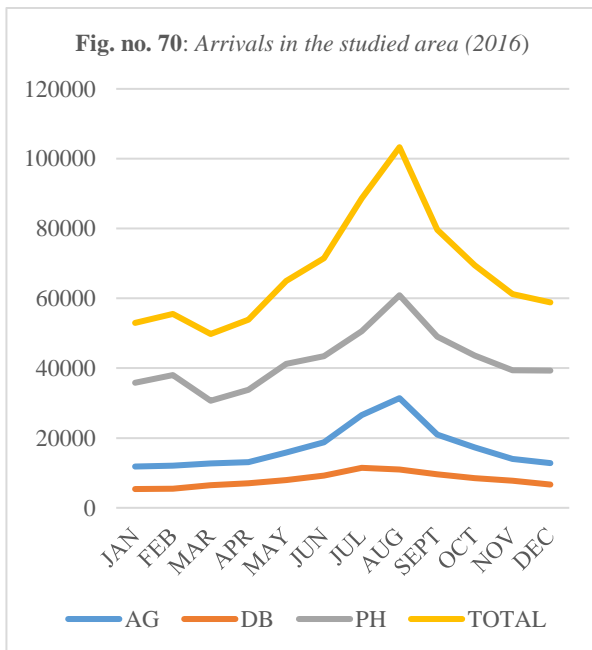
The temporal dynamics of the tourist phenomenon is not generally linear, it reveals different rhythms and intensities depending on a series of natural conditions (the succession of the four seasons, for example, in the temperate climate, the wet and dry seasons in the monsoon areas; unpredictable weather developments) or social (predominant grouping of vacations and holidays during certain periods of the year) etc.

Religious tourism makes no exception, the quantitative oscillations of flows being linked both to the seasons favorable to pilgrimage or camino-style outdoor trips, as well as to the annual calendar of various religious manifestations.

In order to illustrate the above mentioned, we watched the *monthly evolution* of tourism flows within the same year (2016, last year with data available in the National Institute of Statistics statistics at the time of writing), as well as *the multiannual evolution* of indicators (arrivals and overnight stays) starting with 2006 till 2016. I considered it useful to add the 2007-2016 decade the year 2006, the year before the accession of Romania to the European Union, in order to analyze from the tourism point of view the impact of this decisive step in the history of our country.

4.2.1. Monthly flows

At the level of the three counties of the studied area, the monthly evolution of arrivals (synthetic data are included in *Annex 7*) and overnights (the synthetic data are included in *Annex 8*) is represented in Figures no. 70 and 71:



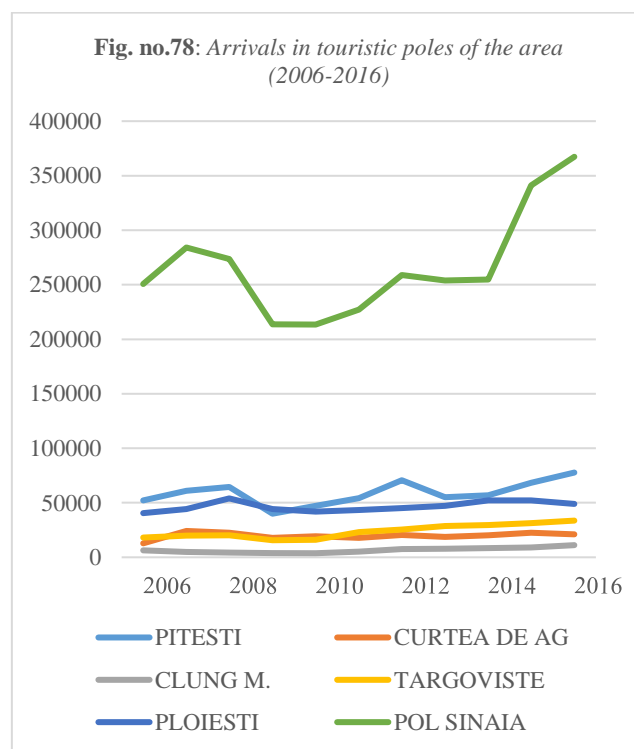
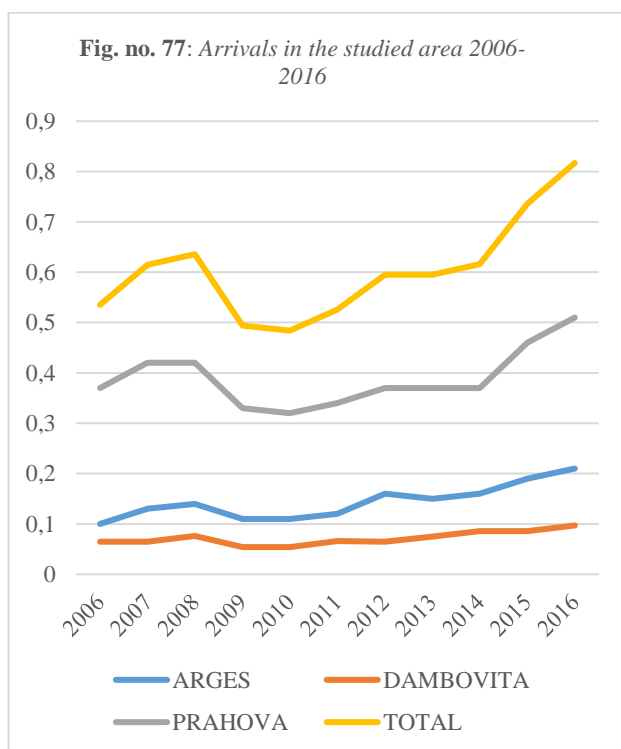
There is an upward trend in the period from March to August, culminating in the last month, which generally overlaps with the holidays of tourists. Due to the major and decisive contribution of

Prahova County, the evolution of the whole area is almost similar to that of this county, slightly shifted with approximately 20,000 participants on the arrivals axis. A similar evolution to that of Prahova County is also in Arges County, but on a smaller scale. For both the arrival and overnight curve, the ratio between the minimum point (January) and the maximum (August) is 1/2. The amplitude of the curve for Dambovită County shows that this county is not as attractive for tourists, not even during the summer vacation.

4.2.2. Multiannual flows (2006-2016)

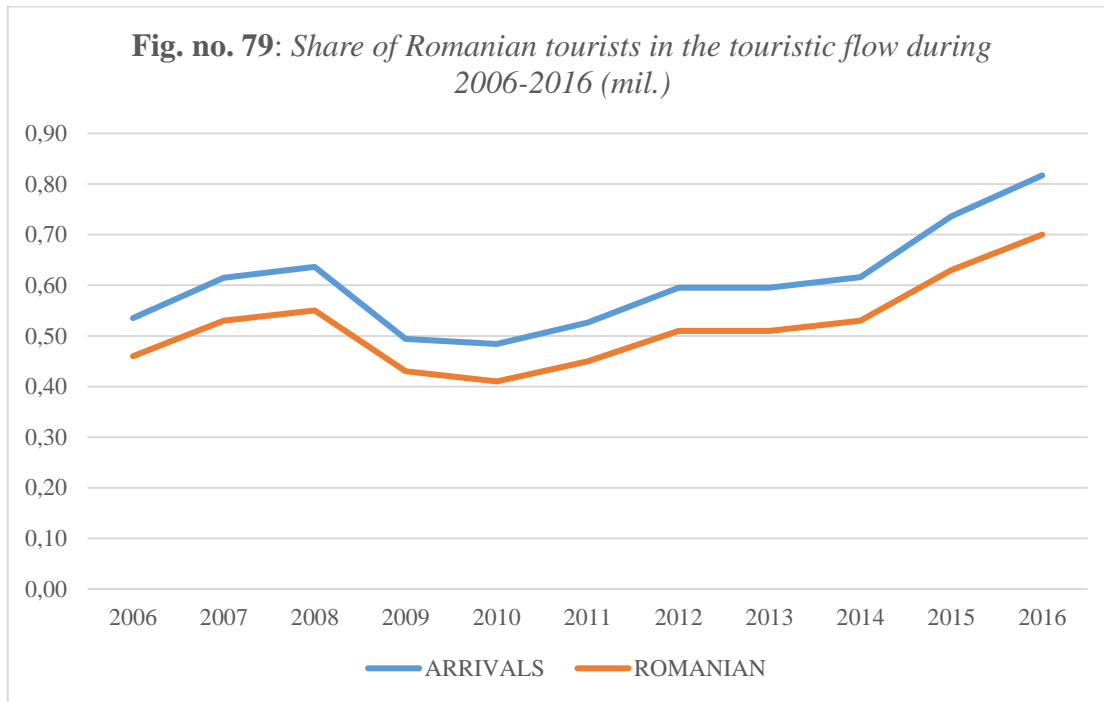
At the level of the studied area there is an increase of tourists' arrivals of 53% (Fig. No.77). This increase is differentiated by the counties: if in Arges county there is a doubling of the number of tourists, at the level of Dambovită county the increase is 49% and 38% in Prahova county. Except for the period 2009-2010, years in which the global financial crisis has also experienced in the tourist phenomenon, there is an increasing trend from year to year. In order to return to pre-crisis indicators (2008), it took six years and in 2014 the values returned to the pre-crisis trend. Since 2014 there has been a more pronounced increase in arrivals in the studied area, which should be mainly due to the increase registered in Prahova county and, to a lesser extent, due to growth in Arges County.

The synthetic values of arrivals and overnight stays in the counties of the studied area during the period 2006-2016 are presented in comparison with those from the most attractive counties of the country in *Annex no. 12*.



The most significant percentage increase in the number of arrivals in the tourist fields in the studied area (*Figure 78*) is recorded in Targoviste Municipality. This (86%) is much higher than the percentage increase of the entire Dambovită county (49%). It results a consolidation of the status of the most important pole of the county. Conversely, we witness a diversification of Arges tourist offer outside the county residence, whose growth is only 49%, compared to the county increase, which is 110%. Significant increases are also recorded in Campulung-Muscel (178%) and Curtea de Arges (166%). In *Annex no. 13* there are synthetically presented the arrivals and overnights in the fields of the studied area for the period 2006-2016 and in *Annex no. 14* the average result for the same poles.

Due to the fact that it is the most important destination, Sinaia pole has an almost identical arrivals curve of that of Prahova County and of the studied area, the pole growth itself (47%) being close to that of the entire studied area (53%).



4. 3. Touristic traffic of worship edifices. Case studies

Certainly, the most appropriate form of tourist flow with religious connotation is given by the number of visitors to the church edifices. In order to emphasize, we consider illustrative the presentation of the following case studies of the flows towards the Nucet Monastery.

In order to outline the profile of the participant in the religious tourism activity, we carried out a sociological research on the number, origin, age categories and purpose of the visitor's movement to the respective edifice. To this end, we chose six important tourism-religious objectives for the cultural landscape of the studied region, namely the following Monasteries: Nucet, Ialomita Cave, Curtea de Arges, Cotmeana, Aninoasa and Caraiman.

4.3.1. Nucet Monastery

It is a religious reference edifice of the region where an important Orthodox Christian pilgrimage takes place on the Day of the Spring of Healing (May 6th, 2016). The central attraction of this pilgrimage is the Heal Fountain, located near the monastery.

In the reference year, thousands of pilgrims participated in the event, most of them in the county, but also outside. The high priests of the Romanian Orthodox Church, headed by His Eminence Nifon, Archbishop and Metropolitan Bishop of Targoviste, as well as numerous officials from the local administration, participated in the event.

The monastery was founded, as most of the historians admit (including the great historian Nicolae Iorga), by the ruler Gherghina Parcalab, the uncle of the ruler Radu the Great, together with his wife, Neaga, at the beginning of the 16th century. However, there is a number of clues (Prof. C. Giurescu) which place the year of its foundation



Fig. no. 81: Nucet Monastery
(Source: *politicabroastei.ro*)

somewhere in the fourteenth century, by Saint Nicodim disciples, Gherghina Parcalab doing nothing but building a new place dedicated to Saint Gheorghe.

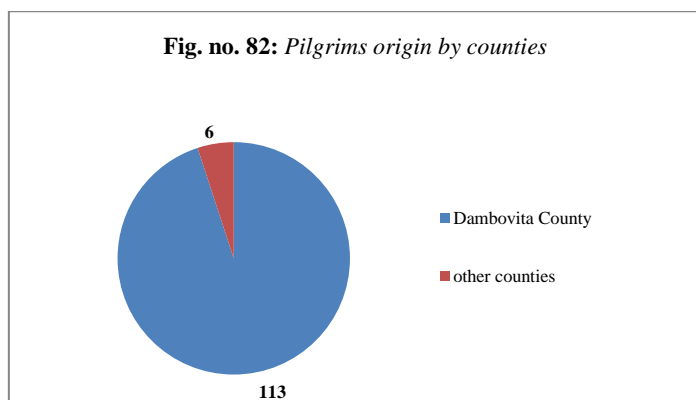
The second stone carved stone at the entrance to the monastery specifies that it was built on the ground in 1861, in the time of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, with the blessing of Metropolitan Bishop Nifon.

Over time, the monastery underwent numerous transformations, but the most important were after the powerful earthquake of 1738, the church being rebuilt at the expense of members of the Vacarescu family. Other changes were reported in the mid-nineteenth century.

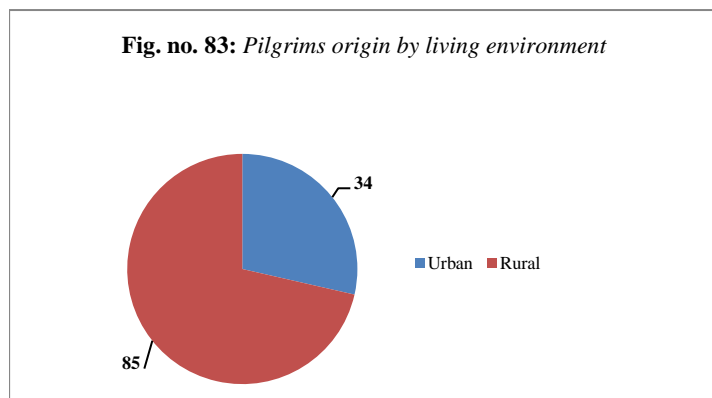
After the secularization of 1863 and the departure of the Greek monks, only Romanian monks remained here until the 1940 earthquake, when the monastery was seriously damaged and abandoned. Since 1994 it has been rebuilt as a monastery and underwent a series of restoration from 1997 to 2004, when it was resanctified by His Archbishop Nifon, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Targoviste.

An extensive pilgrimage, occasioned by the Spring of Healing, with more and more pilgrims, takes place here, the tradition being that, by drinking water sanctified from the Heal Fountain, they will heal various diseases. (Figure 81)

For the purpose of the study, a sociological research based on a questionnaire with 7 questions was carried out: a section of identification data, a section of recommendations and six questions about the purpose, the means of access, how it learned about this pilgrimage, the availability to participate in tourist-religious actions. 119 direct interviews were conducted, following which 119 questionnaires were completed throughout May 6th 2016, on the occasion of the pilgrimage that took place on that day. The main results of the above mentioned questionnaire are illustrated in the following graphs.

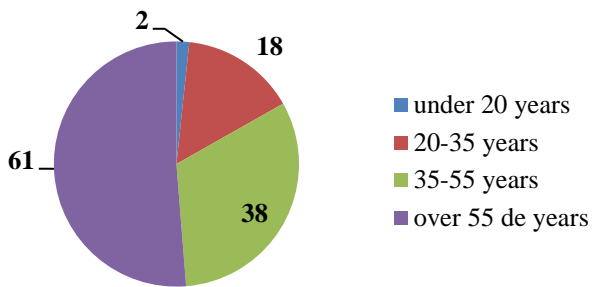


As far as the origin of the tourists is concerned, an overwhelming share belongs to the inhabitants of Dambovită County (95%), only 6 of the 119 surveyed pilgrims are from other counties (Arges and Valcea), (*figure 82*).



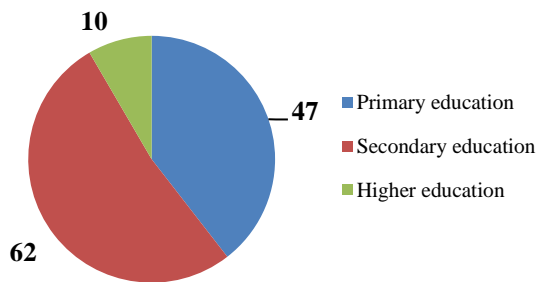
The distribution by residential, rural or urban living environment is also unbalanced, in favor of the former, 71, 5% (85) of the countryside, where religious feeling is stronger, coming in a traditional way, while urban 28.5% (34 surveyed persons). (*Figure 83*).

Fig. no. 84: Age categories



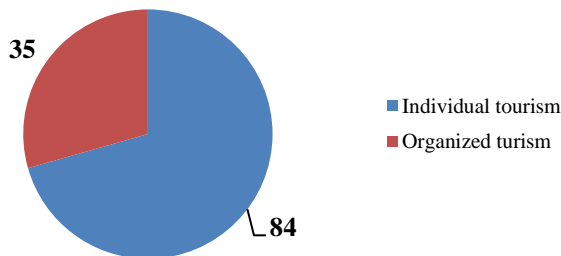
The pilgrims distribution by age group illustrates a major share for the third group, 51% (61 people) being integrated in this existential difference, 32% (38 people) between 35-55 years and 17% (20 participants) young age group, under 35 years. This results in a decrease of religious sense and practices as the participants' age decreases, although in the last 26 years, after 1990, freedom of cults was complete. (Figure 84).

Fig. no. 85: Professional training



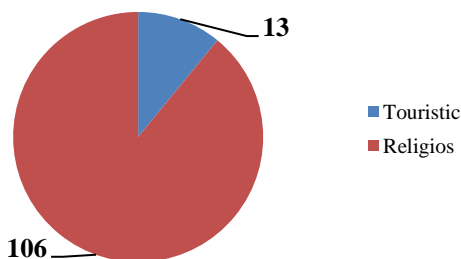
Regarding pilgrims training level, there is a major share of those with secondary education (52%), followed by primary school visitors (39%). Pilgrims with higher education hold only 9% of the study structure (Figure 85).

Fig. no. 86: Travel mode

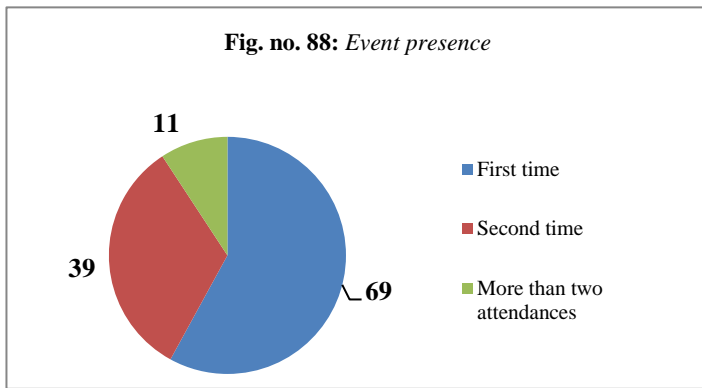


In terms of means of transportation, most visitors used an individual means of transport (70%), but the groups also had a relatively high contribution (30%), (Figure 86).

Fig. no. 87: Travel purpose

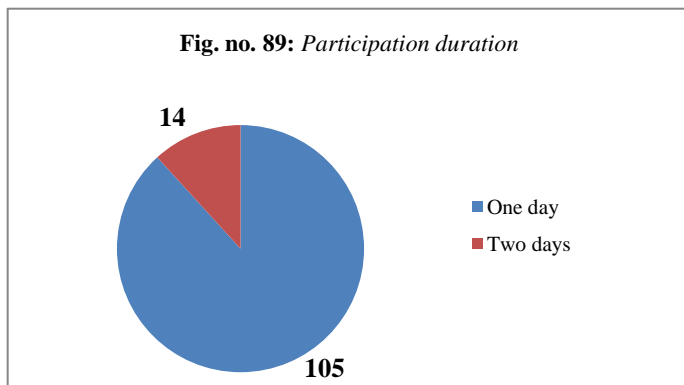


More interesting was the answer to the question regarding the trip purpose, in which 89% (106 people) mentioned only the religious purpose, while only 11% (13 people) mentioned that they went as tourists. (fig. 87).

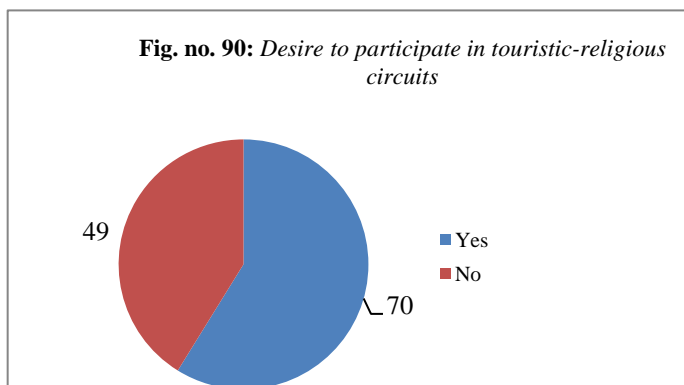


The participation rhythm or continuity in such an event is an important indicator of the tourists loyalty degree and of the event promotional vector. Thus, more than half of respondents participated for the first time (69 representing 58%), 39 (33%) for the second time and only 11 (9%) came more than twice. (Figure 88)

As a source of information, all interviewees said they knew about the event from relatives or acquaintances. None of them found out from religious publications/shows or publications/news broadcasts.

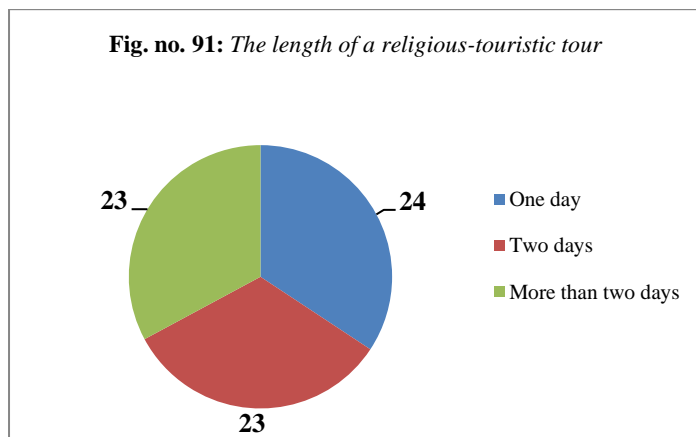


The number of days spent at the event is an indicator that refers directly to the effectiveness of such a form of cultural tourism, most of them (105 representing 88%) only allocated one day, leaving the remaining 12% in the area for two days. This results in a short stay duration with a negative impact on the tourist recipe in general. (Figure 89).



The affirming perspective of this form of tourism was attempted to be surprised by the answers to the willingness to participate in such content tourist circuits question. 70 respondents (59%) expressed their availability, while 49 (41%) denied this option. We consider that this high percentage of those who do not want such tourist activities has more complex causes: material expenses and the time needed to attempt such activity, are two restrictive factors that need to be taken into account.

Fig. no. 91: *The length of a religious-touristic tour*



The above mentioned, especially the time allocated to such activity, are reflected in the question answers about the religious circuit duration. From the 70 respondents available for religious circuits, 24 (34%) would prefer one day, 23 (33%) two days, and another 23 (33%) more than two days. (*Figure 91*).

The conclusions of the above mentioned questionnaire are numerous and can serve as a landmark for a future development strategies for this tourism subtype. Thus:

1. The event does not benefit from a good media coverage; all interviewees had as knowledge source only the information given by relatives or close relatives. Although it is a manifestation with an increasing dynamics, its impact is very little over the territory of the county.

2. The organized cultural and religious tourism is poorly developed in the studied area, with most of the pilgrims coming to the event on their own.

3. There is moderate potential for touristic-religious circuits participation which, however, is not exploited.

4. Intensifying the media coverage of these events both at the Romanian Orthodox Church level through the bishoprics and archiepiscopate, as well as through joint actions with tour operators and local public administration units (mayors and county councils). Foreign bishoprics must play a more active role in promoting these goals in their countries of origin.

5. Increasing the religious objectives attractiveness can be enhanced by: restoring or refurbishing them (especially with European funds), diversifying the complementary souvenirs offer, traditional objects, handicrafts, their inclusion in religious or mixed tourist circuits, etc.

CHAPTER 5. OPTIMIZATION SOLUTIONS AND MEASURES OF THE RELIGIOUS ATTRACTIVE OFFER IN NORTH MUNTENIA

Given the findings of this study, it is necessary to take measures in order to capitalize the studied area religious heritage. These measures are registered in the following areas: improvement of the attractive offer, tourism tour operators partnerships for tourism packages development, access infrastructure quality improvement, lodgings accommodation quality increased conditions etc.

5.1. Broadening and diversifying the attractive offer

Starting from Annex no. 5 in which we calculated the attractive religious potential for 67 representative edifices of the studied area, we noticed the following:

- In terms of building patrimony: 53 do not have miraculous icons, 50 do not have relics, 46 do not have museums or collections, 21 do not have resonance paintings.
- In terms of accessibility: 11 have access to a county road (1 communal road).
- In terms of their own accommodation: 41 do not have such structures.
- In terms of the value index: only 8 are part of foreign tourists packages, while 48 are part of Romanian tourists packages and 11 are not included in any tourist packages; in only 42 of these objectives foreign tourists were reported on their own, 18 of them do not have promotional materials, 49 do not have guides.

Some of the deficiencies that strike the attractive potential of these objectives can be solved individually, especially those related to the building patrimony. Thus, the need to set up small museums, galleries or exhibitions within the religious edifices is obvious in order to provide attractive and additional information to potential visitors about the edifice's importance, the illustrious figures that marked its existence, its community role, as well as its role in the historical-religious ensemble of Wallachia. In order to do this, an inventory of all the exhibits that can contribute to the achievement of this objective, as well as the ensurance of a good state of functionality and the design of the exhibition spaces with bishoprics and county museums specialists. It will be envisaged to equip these museums with several international languages audio guides, as well as employing professional guides.

The physical condition of the religious edifices requires in many cases laborious conservation and protection works. In particular, walls, paintings and cult objects are subject to time passage and refurbishment works are not cheap. A good opportunity for their recovery is represented by European Funding, especially through the Regional Operational Program. Whether it is about the 2007-2013 period or the 2014-2020 period, there has been and there is a strong interest in promoting such projects.

Another issue to be solved is the lack of renovation and reconditioning specialists as well as ecclesiastical painters. This can be done in partnership between the state, the Ministry of Education, and Church Authority. It is necessary to set up classes with these specializations in public schools and in vocational and technical schools so as to cover this need, given the fact that we are talking about one of the densest areas of historical-religious objectives in the country.

Also, in partnership between the Ministry of Education, through the history and geography faculties and the monastic settlements it should be solved the ensuring of specialized guides issue, with extensive competences and knowledge, to satisfy the need of visitors' information. South-Muntenia Regional Development Agency has received the region's decision maker agreement to employ during the summer holidays, when the number of visitors is maximum, students from these faculties to fulfill the guides role in the region's main objectives of this type.

The greatest attractions for pilgrims are the miraculous icons and the various saints relics. Unfortunately, not all the objectives have these values. It is therefore necessary, at various ceremonies, through protocols between the archbishoprics or directly between parishes, to bring miraculous icons from other parts to attract an increasing number of believers. Also, it is necessary to take steps in obtaining saints relics parts (ideally of those saints who give the place's patronage).

Organizing cultural events in religious settings like: religious art exhibitions, religious poetry evenings, evocations of various celebrities that marked the places, religious and classical music concerts and festivals (the Ialomita's Cave Monastery and the Targoviste Synagogue are relevant examples). Better emphasize the legends that are woven around these settlements. For example, at Curtea de Arges Monastery, the legend of Manole the Craftsman is staged regularly in the monastery yard and could be an additional attraction for visitors.

Considering that part of some lodgings patrimony is taken over by the county museums or even the National Museum, it is necessary to fill in the inventory with these objects replicas to complete the exhibits background.

The resumption of the workshops activity, near the worship places, which produce: various fabrics, wooden articles for household purposes, pottery, leather goods, ecclesiastical adornments, souvenirs, food products. Participating with such products at different tourism fairs.

Ecclesiastical authorities with tourism business (hoteliers, hostels and travel agencies) closer collaboration. Partnership development of tourist packages that combine religious tourism with leisure, conferences and business tourism. It is also necessary for the bishoprics and archbishoprics to collaborate for partnership development of pilgrims touristic packages in the territory of two or more eparchies.

The involvement of the Romanian Orthodox Church consulates, embassies, economic missions and bishoprics abroad in the studied area information dissemination of the touristic-religious potential both among Romanian parishioners from abroad and among the citizens of those countries. Making brochures, films and promotional material for this purpose. Cooperation with travel agencies for the development of foreign tourists specific tourist packages.

Programs development and promotion, in partnership with the three counties local government, around and on the occasion of the great Christian celebrations - Easter (Lord's Resurrection) and Christmas (Nativity).

Creating and/or updating the worship places websites with a modern, easily accessible, attractive design with complete, relevant and up-to-date information about the objectives, schedule of activities, etc. More use of social pages to communicate real-time information to potential visitors.

Local government promotion of complementary projects that increase the area overall attractiveness and contribute to the tourists staying extend in the area. A good opportunity to finance such projects is the Regional Operational Program, both for 2007-2013 period and for 2014-2020 period, especially the axis that finances historical and cultural heritage objectives. A number of related infrastructure elements are needed for a good tourist activity at the worship places: access ways and parking, including coaches, sanitary groups, information points, small centers for holding historical, religious and cultural themes conferences, dining areas, etc.

From our observations we notice that the individualized tourist exploitation of each religious objective is, from the point of view of the economic profitability, less efficient, as the visitor realizing the tourist activity related to it in a relatively narrow time (2-4 hours), after which he devotes time to other attractions. This phenomenon is particularly illustrative in the case of transit tourism where "short visits" predominate in relation to longer stays, or as most visitor religious buildings do not yet charge a visit fee and, for those who have introduced it, its values are symbolic, economic profitability is quasi-nonexistent.

Consequently, the establishment of several tourist routes which integrate into a single exploitation system several objectives should become more profitable, retaining the visitors several days in the region and thus leading to more sustainable tourism consumption. Based on the similarities between the different attributes (the patron of a church, the existence of miraculous icons, proximity to the area), the routes from the Northern part of the South-Muntenia development region could be:

ROUTE NO. 1

Bascovle Monastery (Bascov) - Vierosi Monastery (Colibasi) - Rancaciiov Monastery (Calinesti) - Bunea Monastery (Vulcana-Bai)

Route length: 130 km

Attractions: unusual religious cultural landscape, architectural and cultural values, the patron of the church Entrance to the Church of Our Lady (November the 21th);

Duration - 2 days (one dedicated to one of the monasteries (figure 95).

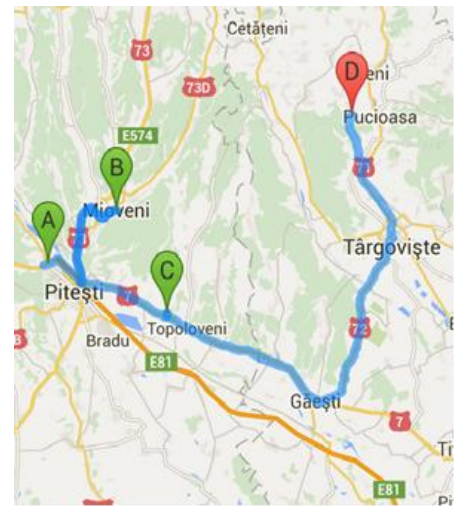


Fig. no. 95: Route no. 1

ROUTE NO. 2

Dealu Monastery (Targoviste) - Cobia Monastery (Gaesti) - Curtea de Arges Monastery (Curtea de Arges)

Route length: 140 km

Motivation: Dealu Monastery and Cobia Monastery have the same patronage (St. Nicholas, December the 6th), and the next day (December the 7th) Saint Filofteia is celebrated, whose relics are located in Curtea de Arges Municipality, the place of an important pilgrimage. Also in Curtea de Arges Municipality some parts of the relics of Saint Nicolae can be found, whose feast is on the previous day.

Date of deployment: December 6-7th

Accommodation: on the night of December 6th, pilgrims can stay at Curtea de Arges (including the Pelerin's House, 50 seats), as well as the surrounding pensions (Figure no. 96).

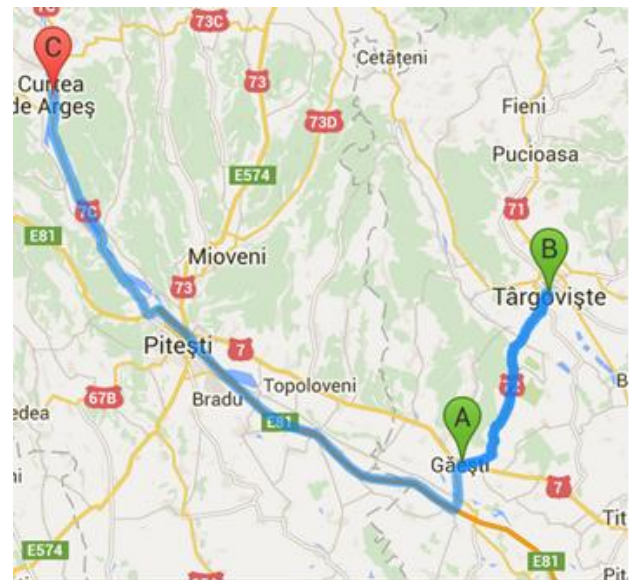


Fig. no. 96: Route no. 2

ROUTE NO. 3

Ciocanu Monastery (Bughea de Sus) - Namaiesti Monastery (Valea Mare - Pravat)

Route length: 8 km

Motivation: Both

monasteries have the same name: Entrance to the Church of the Virgin Mary. As an additional point of attraction we can mention the Miraculous Wonderwork Icon of Namaiesti found in the 16th and the 17th centuries hidden in a huge rock.

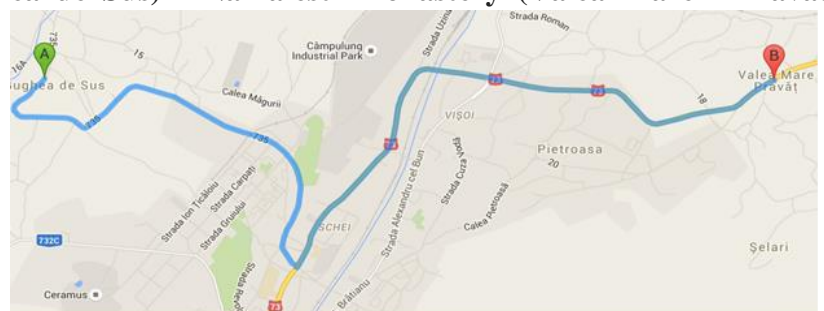


Fig. no. 97: Route no. 3

Date of deployment: November the 21st (Figure No. 97).

ROUTE NO. 4

Archiepiscopate Cathedral Targoviste - Negru Voda Monastery (Campulug Muscel) - Cetatua Monastery (Cetateni) - Curtea de Arges Monastery
Route length: 117 km

Motivation: August 11th is the feast of St. Nifon of Constantinople, a feast that, year after year, it gathers more and more pilgrims and on the August 15th the Dormition of the Virgin Mary is celebrated, the patron of the Monasteries Negru-Voda, Cetateni and the Curtea de Arges, a major feast for the Orthodox Christians. August 12th can be spent taking a cultural-religious tour of Targoviste, the capital of Wallachia, which expects the tourist pilgrims with a rich heritage. Accommodation can be arranged in Targoviste. On August 13th, after the visit to Cetateni Monastery, having as an important point of attraction the Miraculous Icon of the Virgin Mary, together with the *Mosului* Cave, the cave of Ioanichie Schimonahul and the Rock of Desires, considered to be healing places, a trip to Campulung Muscel can be made, the first capital of Wallachia, with many places to visit. Accommodation will be in Campulung Muscel. On August 14th a trip to Curtea de Arges, also capital of Wallachia for a period, with a worthwhile patrimony, can be made. The route can also include the Reclusory Rupestre Stone Crows, considered to be a healing place from pre-Dacians times. The accommodation can be in Curtea de Arges and the next day the pilgrims can attend the service of the Curtea de Arges Monastery. As all the capitals of Wallachia are visited, the tour can be called The Tour of Capitals.

Date of deployment: August 11-15th (Fig. No. 98).



Fig. no. 98: Route no.4

ROUTE NO. 5

Pissiota Monastery (Poienarii Burchii) – Ghighiu Monastery (Barcanesti, Prahova) – Maica Precista Church (Ploiesti) – Zamfira Church (Lipanesti) – Crasna Monastery (Izvoarele, Prahova) – Suzana Monastery (Maneciu, Prahova)

Route length: 124 km

Motivation: all of the six monasteries have miraculous icons representing the Mother of God as heritage. Out of all these icons one can be distinguished, namely the Miraculous Icon of the Virgin Mary (Siriaca) that is located within the Ghighiu Monastery and is very popular amongst the orthodox believers. The icons are described in the chapter regarding the miraculous icons.

This route has as advantage the fact that it can be organised on several periods in time, when the Mother of God is celebrated through important holidays.

Date of deployment: August 15th (the Dormition of the Virgin Mary), September 8th (the Nativity of the Virgin Mary), October 1st (the Wimple of the Virgin Mary), November 21st (the Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple) (*fig. no. 99*).

5.2. Modernising the access routes

Through the analysis of the situation regarding the access routes towards the most important touristic-religious sites situated in our area, we can draw the conclusion that the conditions of the roads is satisfying, especially those fifty-six places of worship that can be reached from our national roads. Regarding the other eleven places of worship that can be reached through our municipal or provincial roads, the conditions of these roads is almost satisfying, except for the one leading to Bunea Monastery, where the access is only pedestrian and the road leading to Cotmeana Monastery. The condition of the CR 703A road that leads to this monastery is precarious but the owner, Arges County Concil is currently having some work done that should be finalised by the end of 2018.

Regarding the modernisation perspectives, Romania's General Transport Masterplan (2015 edition) stipulates the following:

Highways: Transilvania Highway for the sectors: Ploiesti-Campina-Comarnic (51,3 km, 306,77 mil. euro), Comarnic-Sinaia-Busteni-Predeal-Rasnov-Brasov (58 km, 997,75 mil. euro), Oltenia Pitesti-Slatina-Bals-Craiova Highway (124,3 km, 899,41 mil. euro), Pitesti-Sibiu Transcarpathian Highway (116,6 km, 1673,57 mil. euro).

Express Highways: Muntenia Expres Gesti-Targoviste-Ploiesti-Buzau-Braila (237 km, 994,57 mil. euro), Brasovia Expres Pitesti-Mioveni-Campulung-Rucar-Bran-Rasnov-Brasov (124 km, 1224,1 mil. euro).

Trans-Regio Roads: TR Chindia A1-Titu-Baldana-Targoviste (42,3 km, 46,73 mil. euro), TR Cozia Pitesti-Rm. Valcea-Racovita (100 km, 61,8 mil. euro), TR Valea Doftanei Campina-Sacele (63 km, 41 mil. euro).

Regarding the county roads, the main source of funding will be financed through the National Rural Development Programme.

Thus, the following three counties have been selected for financing as follows:

- Arges: the county road CR 703B Serbanesti-Rociu (7,4 km, 14,8 mil. lei), the county road CR 702A Ciupa-Ratesti (2,7 km, 4,5 mil. RON), the county road CR 703B Costesti-Serbanesti (8,5 km, 10,8 mil. RON), the county road CR 703B Moraresti-Uda (2,5 km, 9,8 mil. RON).

- Dambovita: the county road CR 702D Dragomiresti-Butoiu de Sus (5,7 km, 10,6 mil. RON), the county road CR 702 county line for Arges-Candesti-Vale (9,3 km, 13,5 mil. RON), the county road

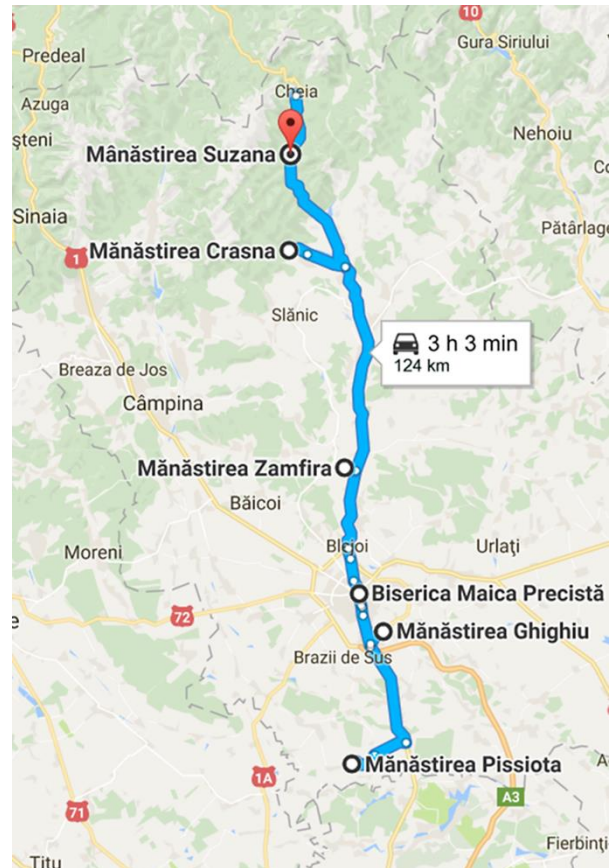


Fig. no. 99: Route no. 5

CR 701 Odobesti-Corbii Mari (6 km, 7,2 mil. RON), the county road CR 702J Morteni - county line for Arges county (2 km, 2,4 mil. RON), the county road CR 601A the county line for Giurgiu County - Racari (7 km, 9,4 mil. RON).

- Prahova: the county road CR 206 Talea (1,2 km, 1,7 mil. RON), the county road CR 231 Gornet-Pacureti (1,5 km, 2,4 mil. RON), the county road CR 102I Valea Doftanei (2,5 km, 11,3 mil. RON).

Regarding the railway transport in the studied area, the Master Plan stipulates only two sectors: Bucharest (Chitila)-Pitesti (99 km, 249,4 mil. euro) and Pitesti-Rm. Valcea Nord (60 km, 365,8 mil. euro).

5.3. Accomodation base diversification and standardization

If the owners of the places of worship provide their own accomodation it will result directly the increasing of the time spent there by the visitors.

Having over 700 accomodation places in thirty-one units, with an accomodation capacity fluctuating between 4 and 100 places, the places of worship situated in the studied area represent a good basis for the future development of a solid accomodation for the visitors and pilgrims.

The accomodation the the Caraiman monastery offer is by far the most important of them. By having 100 accomodation places, it is a model for all the places of worship that wish to develop such accomodation.

The major challenge of the places of worship will be the one to register the accomodation places so that these can be entered in the tourism circuit. They also need the personnel to serve all the utilities, in addition to building accomodation places, building and equipping units for preparing and serving food, laundry services, parking spaces.

5.4. A model of spatial development for the studied area

We identified a number of six poles of tourism interest in the studied area (Arges, Dambovita and Prahova counties). These poles are: the 3 capitals of county seats (Pitesti, Targoviste and Ploiesti), Campulung-Muscel and Curtea de Arges Municipalities and Sinaia pole composed of Sinaia, Busteni and Azuga cities. We also identified some tourism poles that can interact with the 6 poles in the studied area, considered as genuine tourism pools. These are: Bucharest, Brasov Pole (Brasov Municipality, Bran-Moieciu and Predeal area), Sibiu Municipality and Valcea Pole (Ramnicu Valcea Municipality, Calimanesti, Olanesti, Baile Govora and Voineasa).

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS

Closely coordinated with the plan of the thesis, our scientific approach can be summarised in the following conclusions:

1. **The theoretical base** of the study has imposed a detailed radiography of the scientific, native and international contributions referring to the religious tourism. This radiography made it possible for us to observe that, for the mostly part, choosing the theme justifies itself: if the aspects referring to the tourism domain are extremely numerous are varied internationally, the geographic vision crosses paths often with the economic, sociologic and teologic one; in the romanian literature the studies are few, concise and only at the surface. The references often wrap the wording of a general nature, focused above the semnifications of the religious tourism concept. We can still find consistent references, under the shape of some chapters, in synthesis papers and they primarily cover the religious attractive resources. According to this perspective, *our thesis enriches the romanian geographic literature through a complex, curious analysis of the religious tourism phenomenon* of a representative region from our country, namely North Muntenia.

Related to the clasification of the religious tourism, found at diverse authors as *type, shape* or, rarely, as tourism *subtype*, which frequently raises interpretative confusions, our analysis highlighted, on one side, its specificity inside a major type, the cultural tourism and on the other side its complexity, fact that distances it of its forms of practising.

As a result, ee choose with our own argumentation, for its customization as a self-standing *subtype* of the type mentioned previously, having distinct forms of practising (first of all the pilgrimages).

2. In the North part of the South Muntenia Development Region (including Arges, Dambovita and Prahova counties) the religious tourism benefits from ***an attractive and remarcable potential*** which, in Romania, only Bucovina equals, being illustrated by the diversity and numerous edifices of worship: 55 monasteries, 1145 churches, 4 cathedrals, 13 enclosed convents, 17 religious places that have relics, 8 places of power, 13 miraculous icons, but also through the variety of the religious manifestations (pilgrimages towards places of power and miraculous icons, celebrations of the patrons of churches).

The distribution in space of the religious tourism objectives highlights a favorability relatively high index, as these are spreaded on the territory in immediate relation to the presence and density of the network of urban settlements. The isolation phenomenon appears nevertheless in the case of religious settlements (enclosed convents especially), situated in unhabitated places, hardly accesible. A high concentration can be seen in the big urban centers (Ploiesti, Pitesti, Targoviste) and in some cities that have an important historic and religious role (Curtea de Arges, Sinaia, Campulung). The fact that churches are present in every city leads to a spatial dispersion of the elements of touristic interest, which integrates practically the entire regional territory in the potential sphere of practising this subtype of tourism..

The physical stage of the religious representative objectives is, to the fullest extent, good. This advantage need to be exploited in order to develop the tourism perspective activities without high restauration expenses for the religious buildings affected by the time passing and the negligence of the communities; a growing concern from the authorities (administrative and ecclesiastical) has appeared in order to renovate the heritage objectives and with tourism potential, fact that is already registered in the previous period of financing through the European Structural Funds, especially through the Regional Operational Programme (Regio) 2007-2013 and through the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) 2007-2013. These opportunities continue to exist in the european financial year 2014-2020, currently under progress.

The tipological diversity of the religious edifices is various, being in close relation to the used criteria. We can thus mention:

- According to the material used in construction: wood, brick, stone, composit materials edifices;

- According to the religion practiced: orthodox (the absolut majority!), catholic, mozaic, neo-protestant.
- According to the religious function: cathedrals, monasteries, churches, enclosed convents, synagogues etc.

The detailed inventory of the religious tourism heritage of the region and the capture of the spatial relations between the various groups of objectives have been a primary purpose of the present work as a necessary and mandatory precondition for the selection of the options for capitalizing the sustainability of religious tourism.

3. ***The infrastructure of religious tourism*** (accommodation bases and access routes) generally meets the demand for the intensity of current flows, but it does not constitute an asset of the territory for a forward-looking development. Its main attributes are:

- With almost 26,000 existing accommodations places in over 900 locations, the tourist accommodation infrastructure in the North of South-Muntenia Development Region is currently providing a good base for at least satisfactory cultural and religious tourism. However, taking into account that most of the tourist bases were built up 40-50 years ago, their physical condition requires considerable improvement;

- All types of accommodation structures in the Romanian nomenclature (except floating pontoons) are found in the infrastructure of the three counties, which is an important premise for practicing a diversified variety of forms of cultural-religious tourism;

- The largest density of accommodation structures is found in the three counties (out of which Pitesti and Ploiesti detach themselves), to which are added the consecrated valley of Prahova as well as the areas of Curtea de Arges, Rucar-Dambovicioara and Slanic Prahova-Maneciu-Cheia.

- Most tourist accommodation structures (85%) are classified with 2 and 3 stars / flowers, which makes tourism especially attractive for people with a medium income, predominantly at national level;

- However, we have a very low number of accommodation structures of 5 stars/flowers, especially in Arges and Dambovita counties. An additional problem in this regard seems to have the municipality of Targoviste, an important cultural and religious center, which does not have accommodation capacity at the level of 4 stars. In the perspective of developing an external tourism in these areas, these aspects represent a major handicap;

- The grouped distribution, predominantly in the urban area, in the studied territory of the accommodation structures makes the access to the objectives to be visited relatively easy;

- As for the dynamics of the number of accommodation structures in the period 2010-2014, there is a remarkable increase in the number of hotels (approximately 40%) and, above all, in the number of pensions (over 200%). This increase can be attributed to the opportunity to finance such investments from European pre-accession and post-accession funds.

- An alternative that is increasingly taken into account by tourists is accommodation in structures belonging to the monasteries. Some of these facilities are set up as tourist accommodation establishments, with accommodation capacity between 50 and 100 places;

- The network of land transport routes that provides access to some of the objectives of the religious heritage studied is developed whether we are talking about european, national or county and communal roads. Also, the presence of Romania's main aerial gate (Henri Coanda Airport) at a distance of 150 kilometers (in relation to the town of Campulung-Muscel) is a first-class facility for attracting tourists from abroad.

4. ***Visitor flows*** framed to the religious tourism subtype are difficult to assess due to its interference with cultural tourism itself, where visiting religious objectives is only a component of the access offer as well as the major share of transit tourism that, within a limited time, appeals on the religious offer without a stay that could be quantitatively quantified.

- As a result, certain aspects arise in the case of tourists accommodated in the infrastructure belonging to religious buildings, monasteries in the first place, or those who access elements of the religious tourist patrimony where a visiting fee is charged.

- Certainly, the participants in pilgrimages and worships can be described as practitioners of this tourism, the most typical forms of religious tourism.

- Unlike recreational or cultural tourism in general, where there is a well-marked seasonality, with summer maximums in both cases, in religious tourism the affluence of practitioners is dictated by the calendar of major religious manifestations (the worship of various churches), distributed with relative approximation throughout the year. Certainly, in the warm season of the year in the temperate zone, the number of practitioners increases as a result of existing climate facilities.

- An important impact on the size of the flows of religious tourism practitioners has the quality of the access infrastructure, especially the road infrastructure. The modernization of transport routes is a "sine qua non" condition of visiting religious objectives, often located in more difficult places. Diversification is a real advantage in mentioned terms. The cable car that connects the lanes of Prahova and Ialomita valleys to the homonymous cave, escalating the steep Bucegi, (where a unique religious edifice is located) is a good example in this direction.

- Also, as a conclusion to the abovementioned, the location of the capital of Romania (an urban center with more than 2 million inhabitants, playing the role of an important tourist flow area, but also with two international airports), at a distance of 50-150 km from the analyzed religious attractions, is another advantage, which, in higher use, can lead to the development of visiting and ecumenical tourism, to the substantial numerical increase of flows of national and international visitors.

5. The current economic component of religious tourism in the studied region is relatively modest. The analysis of the previous chapters leads to the revelation of a true paradox: although the region's attractive religious potential is remarkable, being made up of a large number of objectives of a great typological diversity, its participation in the economic balance of the territory is still very modest. Aspect generated by a cumulation of restrictive factors that diminishes the values of the tourist traffic and, implicitly, of the cashings generated by it. The most illustrative are:

- limited accessibility to many religious objectives (especially those located in rural localities on the periphery of the three counties) due to the precarious state of the existing roads;

- insufficient number and unsatisfactory accommodation bases in terms of quality of services offered to tourists;

- the modest degree of preservation and/or arrangement of many churches or hermitages, which makes them unattractive and inappropriate for inclusion in the actual tourist circuits;

- the lack of guides qualified in displaying and presenting a specific tourist offer with an unique character that addresses a particular category of visitors with a particular culture and behavior;

- a limited range of tourist products (books, albums, maps, guides, leaflets, souvenirs) appropriate to the religious ambience of the top goal;

- relatively poor supply in activities with religious substrate (conferences on biblical themes, summer schools, painting schools, etc.) that diversify the offer considered standard for any religious tourism objective: architecture, seniority, function, cultural values acquired.

From our observations it is noticed that the individualized tourist exploitation of each religious objective is, from the point of view of the economic profitability, less efficient, the visitor realizing the tourist activity related to it in a relatively narrow time (2-4 hours), after which they devote their time to other attractions. This phenomenon is particularly illustrative in the case of transit tourism in which "short visits" predominate in relation to longer stays, or as most visitor religious buildings do not yet charge a visit fee and, for those who have introduced it, its values are symbolic, economic profitability is quasi-nonexistent.

As a result, we appreciate that setting up tourist paths that integrate a number of objectives into a single exploitation system can become more profitable by maintaining the visitor for several days in the region and thus leading to more sustainable tourism consumption.

6. The development potential of the religious tourism in the Northern part of South-Muntenia Development Region is remarkable, due in the first place to the consistency of its attractive heritage and secondly to its geographic position within the country and to a number of important centers tourist emitters (first of all Bucharest).

- On the basis of a great potential for attractiveness, we rely on the affirmation in the studied region of a *sustainable religious tourism*, with a durability guaranteed by:

- diversifying and improving the attractive offer;
- diversification of the religious tourism product;
- specific development policies and strategies;
- wider involvement of local communities (facilitated by the dissipation of tourism resources);
- the involvement of religious institutions in supporting tourist activities as a source of income;

Diversification and improvement of the attractive offer of religious tourism in the Northern part of South-Muntenia Development Region would suppose: the establishment of religious *theme parks* (similar to the one called The Holy Land Experience, in Orlando - SUA or Tierra Santa in Argentina); the establishment of *painting schools*; *volunteer* religious activities; *musical manifestations* with religious repertoire; the inclusion in tourist circuits of cemeteries where are buried historical, artistic or cultural personalities. In this context is set the royal necropolis of Curtea de Arges in a national resonance objective that must be fully exploited by its commemorative function; *collections and museums* with rich religious inventory; exploiting the *mystical aura* of canonized saints, etc.

In order to increase the attractiveness of the religious heritage of the studied area, including at international level, I propose the start of procedures for obtaining the UNESCO World Heritage status for the following places:

- *Curtea de Arges Monastery*, the true necropolis of the royal family in Romania;
- *Dealul Monastery*, a place where several voivodes of Romanian country rest (including the head of the great voivode Mihai Viteazul) and where the first printings from South-Eastern Europe were made.

The synergistic nature of the tourist activities currently deployed in the Northern part of the South-Muntenia Development Region is modest, requiring a more sustained partnership action to better valorize each representative objective in part and all together. As the results of the partner action are exemplary: tourist products that include different objectives grouped by themes, areas, styles etc., drafting calendars of festivities, anniversaries, etc. following the dialogue between all the religious institutions concerned, in order to avoid overlapping some of them, increasing the degree of information and promotion of the area, etc.

In order to increase the exploitation index of this significant patrimony, by professionalizing those directly involved in the operation, it is opportune and interesting to collaborate between the faculties of History and Geography in the country and South-Muntenia Regional Development Agency in order to employ and prepare within it, during the summer holidays, students eager to practice tourist guide activity.

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