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RELIGIOUS AND PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN
MARAMURES
SUMMARY

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Arguments for the choice of subject matter

The chosen subject matter is encompassing, complex, and meaningful, at the same time. Religious tourism has been amply studied by researchers, as it is full of grace, creative and it combines physical activity with the workings of the heart and soul. When I first decided on this theme, I was pulling from both of my areas of study: geography and theology. As a theologian, not simply as one who had studied the subject, but one who prays and speaks to God, I find my previous study of geography and tourism has added a deeper dimension of feeling towards this area of interest.

I consider religious and pilgrimage tourism to be complex phenomena. There are numerous studies on the subject, at the international level, but very few Romanian researchers have written in this particular field. The personal contribution of the thesis includes the complex analysis of religious and pilgrimage tourism, identifying the strengths and opportunities for tourism product development: tailor-made to client's needs, environmentally conscious, and sustainable; integrating these products into growth strategies at a local, county, national and international level. The key elements to designing, planning, promoting and implementing programs and packages for religious and pilgrimage tourism in Maramures county are practical studies of the area, the creator's personal experience, observations made during tourism activities, and researching feedback given by past tourists and pilgrims.

I operate a clear distinction between tourism, religious tourism and pilgrimage. While in accord with the existing literature that posit a considerable lessening in distinction between religious tourism and pilgrimage tourism, I do not agree with, do not accept and refuse to use the term "secular pilgrimage"! When the spiritual component is lacking, the term used must be tourism.

Pilgrimages, alongside the specialized touristic services offered based on location, have a faith-based component, to a lesser or greater degree, through the acknowledgement of the divine, the otherworldly.

Maramures is a land blessed by God, located on the northern border of Romania, whose people are war and hardworking, deeply religious and devoted to preserving their customs and traditions, as they prioritize their relationship with God and their neighbour.

Religious and pilgrimage tourism in Maramures county and in Romania are quite thriving in certain areas. National/regional/county-level programs have been created, alongside certain systems for advertising and development, in order to offer professional services, in a systematic and organized manner. The possibility to access European funds represents a convenient option for supplementing local resources, and we will further provide concrete answers and possible paths for improvement within this paper. Religious and pilgrimage tourism in Maramures has an exceptional natural and anthropogenic patrimony/ heritage.



Fig 1. Location of Maramures County

Personal experience is fundamental and saving when it comes to designing, implementing, and developing pilgrimages and tourist packages. The answer to the question: why a tourist/pilgrim/guide? is that by knowing different places and people we know God, and it brings me happiness.



Fig. 2. Guided Pilgrimage: viewpoint on the Mount of Olives

Blessed are those who can say: I, too, have been to Maramures!

1.2. Thesis Structure

The PhD thesis titled *Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism in Maramures* is organized in 7 chapters. These chapters present the evolution of religious and pilgrimage, in time and space, from a global level to our specific area of study, Maramures County.

The results and conclusions of the presented study represent years of *ora et labora*, wherein work was joined with prayer, theoretical knowledge was put into practice to bring joy, so that the tourist or pilgrim may experience high-quality services, while employing procedures that can be replicated.

Peace and joy!

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Terminology

The key terms used within the current thesis are *pilgrimage, pilgrim, religious tourism, tourism, religion, faith, divinity, man, tourist, traveller, organizer, theology, geography, experience*. In addition to the definitions in the dictionary for these terms, I will explain what the components of religious and pilgrimage tourism are, as well as core traits of pilgrims and tourists.

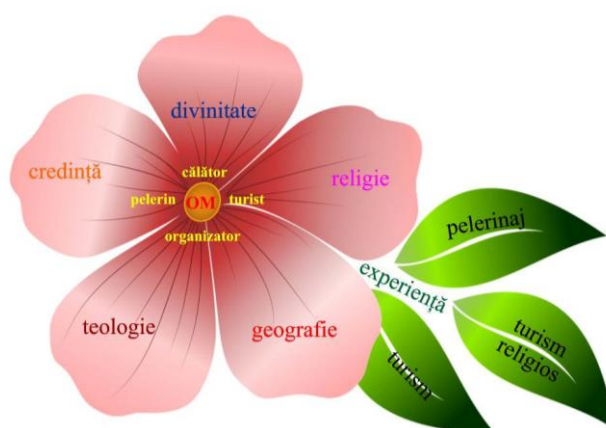


Fig.3. Key terms of the thesis

The study of the relationship with God and creation. We will focus on what God has created, the crowning achievement of the Creation of man, as well as how the actions of men (human beings) connect with God, and the evolution of the divine gift.

Pilgrimages or religious tourism trips occur in a geographical space that has become sacred through the presence of God and theology, with the core subject as the human being, the pinnacle of Creation who expresses their faith and religiosity, experiencing an unforgettable event and consuming tourism products/services, integral parts of the tourism activity.

2.2. The Life Cycle of Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism

Faith, religion, man's connection with God have taken many different forms from the most distant past until the present, which makes analysing them quite an impossible task. Travelling, tourism, and the pilgrimage have been, and still are, in a continuous process of development. The next few paragraphs contain a synthesis of ideas and paradigms regarding religious and pilgrimage tourism that can be found in the existing literature and included in the Bibliography, as they represent the basis for the current study.

All pilgrims share one trait: the search for one's self, something spiritual, religious, mysterious that prompts the individual to travel to a certain location.

At present, all tourists, pilgrims, local inhabitants and other participants to these tourism activities use the same resources located in the proximity of a landmark: transportation, infrastructure, designated parking, public restrooms, tourism services, ATMs.

The delineation between tourism, religious tourism and pilgrimage is becoming less clear, but there is no such thing as profane pilgrimage.

The life cycle model for religious and pilgrimage tourism plays a major part in all major world religions. Pilgrimage is defined as a trip prompted by religious reasons, physically visiting a sacred place, or a spiritual journey for internal growth. The four stages of this model are **(1) introduction, (2) growth, (3) maturity, and (4) rejuvenation or decline.**

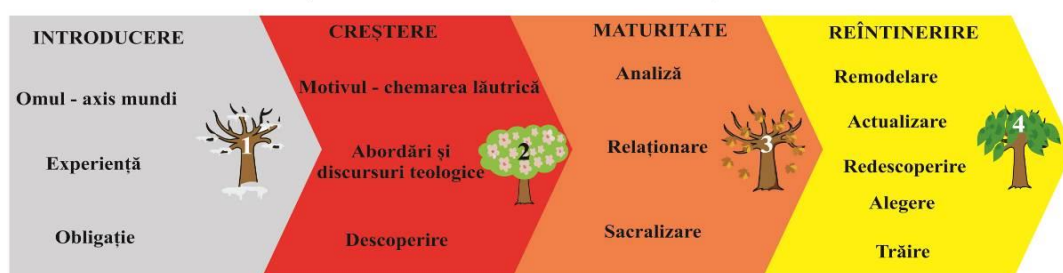


Fig. 4. Religious and pilgrimage tourism – Life cycle

The tourist cannot be described as a “general type”, as there are 5 primary types of tourist experience: **recreational, fun, experiential, experimental, and existential**.

The main motivation for going on a pilgrimage, not excluding the recreational and uplifting purpose, is a divine calling, a personal request, or fulfilling a pledge. The requests are oftentimes simple and based in reality: good health, peace of mind, conjugal bliss, having children.

Pilgrimage requires a sacred space and time, and a divine presence for all activities. The action of going to a holy and sanctifying place at a sacred time makes the time spent therein transform from Chronos to Kairos.

We have analysed the changes that have occurred over time, and the directions of development have proven to be quite natural. A pilgrim does not enter a 2000-year-old aquarium, but experiences those moments, choosing to keep the good and healthy parts in human evolution, faith-based evolution, religion, and moral law.

In order for a pilgrimage to be complete, it must have the following components: the preparation, the journey, the progress, the celebration - the high point, the return, and the post-pilgrimage pilgrimage. Regardless of the initial status of the traveller, be it tourist, religious tourist, or pilgrim, an analysis can reveal if any change has occurred, either voluntary or involuntary, observable or not. Time, intensity and fulfilment are considered to be indicators for the effectiveness of the journey.

The geography of religious and pilgrimage tourism is in constant evolution. The theoretical aspect and technology advance alongside the simplicity of the religious acts and the complexity of the religious sites. These sacred places and acts bring man closer to God, and pilgrimage makes man into the image of God, and the divine gift returns to the Giver, home.

2.3. Methodology

The PhD thesis titled *Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism in Maramures* is a very important project for me. It is the crowning achievement of my scientific work, representing years of study. I have condensed the research for presentation in this paper, but I have also provided possible applications for the development of religious and pilgrimage tourism in Maramures. The project has the following structure: **design phase** (technical/scientific + management) and **implementation phase** (technical/scientific + management).

Based on this study and its results, we have created prototypes for pilgrimages and the pilgrims, as well as the differences and similarities in relation to religious tourism and tourism,

in general. During a pilgrimage, the pilgrim lives in a blessed space in a sacred time, which sanctifies their life, all distances and disagreements between human beings fade, as pilgrimages are saving works, through which one tastes eternal life

3. THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS AND PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

3.1. Pilgrimage from a Theological Perspective

The pilgrimage can be defined as: *a journey to a special place that is spiritually significant, willingly disconnecting from day-to-day life for a certain period of time, a change in environment, as well as a change in lifestyle, a willing alienation.*

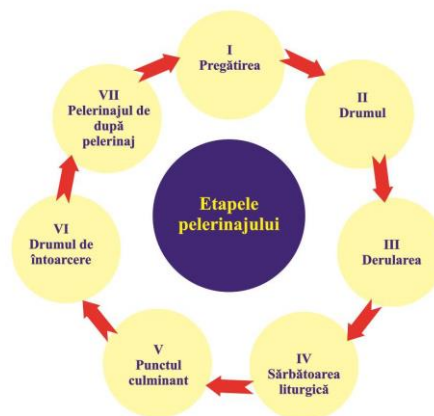


Fig. 5. The stages of a pilgrimage

There are certain stages within a pilgrimage: the preparation, the journey, the progress, the celebration, the high point, the return, and the post-pilgrimage pilgrimage. For a complete and complex pilgrimage, all stages must be observed.

The pilgrimage is trying to experience the sacred meaning for life, the reciprocal search for man and God.

The social aspect of the pilgrimage transforms us into equal beings for a short period of time on this earth, as we are before God and standing **before His Glory, it seems as if we stand in the Heavens**. The spiritual outweighs the physical, the verb *to be* is more important than *to have*, give, and you shall receive, what you already have, what you do not have, and what you are.

3.2. The History of Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism

We will analyse the major global religions. In 2021, Earth has a population of approximately 7.8 billion people. A very crucial aspect is that we must posit that there can be no religious or pilgrimage tourism activities for a religion other than that which the traveller considers their own. By visiting religious landmarks belonging to other faiths is a practice of cultural tourism.

The pilgrimage belongs to the heavens and earth and is an open gate for our search on this plane for what we wish for in the afterlife.

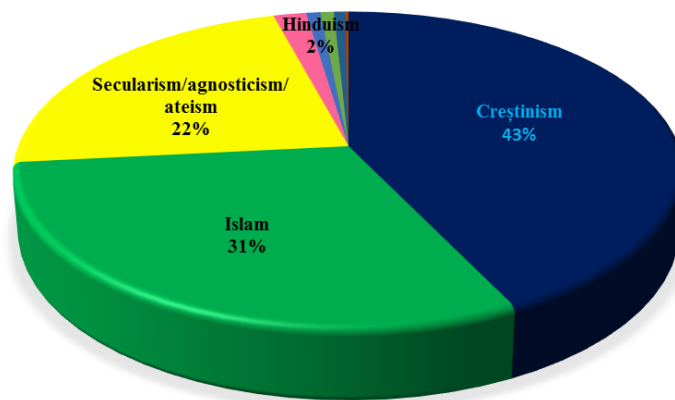


Fig. 6. Religious distribution - Percentage of the global population

In the next paragraphs, some terms in different languages will be explained, as well as the denotation and connotation of the Romanian word “PELERIN” (pilgrim).

The Greek term **proskinitis** – means worshipper and pilgrim through a detachment from the world. The Russian term **palomnik** is derived from the Latin “palmarius” and can be translated as a person who returned from the Holy Land with a palm leaf. The Latin term **peregrinus** can be translated as a traveller who journey to a far place (for a time).

These terms accurately express what the faithful experiences during a pilgrimage where, through certain actions, through prayer, of which there are four types, *of praise, of thanksgiving, of repentance, and of request*, they ask for a change, a rejuvenation in their lives, giving thus a purpose and a result for both an individual pilgrim, as well as their neighbour.

The reasons for departing on a pilgrimage are *visiting the Holy Site, prayer, fulfilling a promise, changing one’s life and divine assistance*.



Fig. 7. Pilgrims praying – Capernaum 2019

The pilgrim, after receiving assistance, leaves a votive offering to God, the saints, either in material form, or immaterial. Their spiritual state is so much improved that they say, as had Saint Peter on Mount Tabor, “Lord, it is good for us to be here” (Matthew 17:4).

There are certain stages to complete within a pilgrimage: the preparation, the journey, the progress, the celebration, the high point, the return, and the post-pilgrimage pilgrimage.

3.3. Religious Tourism and Pilgrimages in Romania

The territory contained within Romanian borders at present was inhabited by the Dacians 2000 years ago, and their territory was greater in surface. There were, also, peoples who worshipped multiple gods, but the Dacian population was among the few monotheists of the times. Tertulian records that, around 150-200 AD, both the Dacians and the Scythians were aware of Jesus Christ. This seems to be a natural consequence of the fact that Saint Andrew the Apostle, and even Philip the Apostle, had preached in the area currently located in Dobrogea, according to sources of the time. The conversion to Christianity does not have an exact date in the case of our ancestors, but it has an apostolic origin, which is a more complex and lengthy process, spanning across multiple centuries.

We will list several brand landmarks that we consider to be the most representative for the historical regions of Romania, based on an analysis of several indicators, including the unique nature of the site, number of tourists received, degree of preservation, and ease of access.



Fig. 8. Romania – Religious landmarks and brand pilgrimage, organized in historic regions

Pilgrimages and religious tourism in Romania have a very long tradition, even if they have not been particularly robust. Christians, regardless of denomination, have had and maintain a special relationship with God. The population on Romania’s territory has travelled for trade, for medical treatment to thermal resorts and spas, and for the purpose of knowing and rejoicing in Christ once monasteries and churches began being built. Religious and pilgrimage tourism must not become an industry in scope, it must remain a deeply personal type of tourism.

3.4. Maramures – Centre of Faith, Religion, Origin and Repository of Culture and Spirituality

Maramures, blooming land, / you are radiant during celebrations – these are 2 lyrics from a renowned traditional folk song, greatly inspired by the local traditions. We will present the historic evolution of these wonderful lands, blessed by God. Maramures is sound and colour, not only a place, but a state of spirit, wherein other types of tourism are practiced, alongside religious and pilgrimage tourism.

From a territorial perspective, Maramures has had several configurations during its long history, among the most notable being: Maramures Voevodate, Maramures Comitat, Historical Maramures, Maramures Country and Maramures County.



Fig. 9. Maramures Voevodate (Historical MM) – Maramures County – Maramures Country

At present, there is a significant number of Orthodox churches and monasteries, but there is also a corresponding number of other places of worship for other religions, based on number of members. There are 3 synagogues in Maramures, and an additional one is being built in Sighetu Marmatiei.

The inhabitant of Maramures (Maramureșanul – in Romanian) has a close connection with God, their communication being mediated through the village priest in the Maramures countryside; the priest, the teacher and the mayor have a fundamental function, the priest being the only irreplaceable role, as he can accomplish all three functions, and his advice may save or condemn.

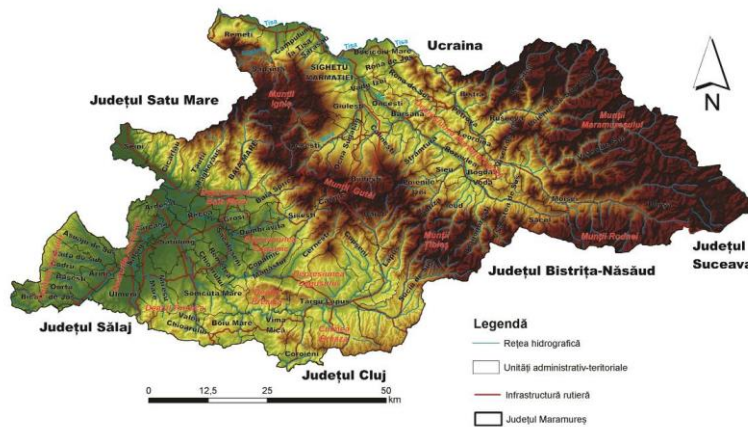


Fig. 10. Maramures County – Physical map

Whenever they break ground for the construction of a new house or well, the priest is called to bless the chosen plot of land, and the priest is also sent for before the first plough, or when the grazing livestock must go to the summer pastures, or when they return in autumn. The

relationship between the priest and the faithful is quite deep, even with the less observant individuals.

This relationship is quite important whenever a person experiences joys or sorrows, they may ask for individual prayers, or request litanies, and offer antidoron to celebrate the living and the departed.



Fig. 11. Folk clothing from Maramures County

Whenever a loved one is born, gets married, or dies, we will notify the priest, who is tasked with completing the required rituals and traditions, both based in the Orthodox dogma, as well as some pre-Christian customs that still survive.

It is only when you do not forget about God in your daily life, even for an instant, that you have God in your heart. Concerning daily tasks, crafts played a special part, being undertaken with much passion, dedication, and talent. A regular working day began with prayers, as all signs and motifs employed by crafters were significant and held deep meaning, which is also described in a different subchapter. Traditional pre-Christian and Christian motifs can be seen on wooden gates, weavings, folk clothing, pottery, as well as paintings and other products made by hand. In the past, a painter, for example, be they priest or faithful, would observe lent, hold to a certain canon so that the Holy Ghost enlighten their mind, heart and craft.

Maramures is the cradle of authentic Romanian orthodoxy, which can be described in many ways that can be summarized in one sentence. The sound of bells or the semantron call the faithful to church in the morning. We can see how the faithful walk to church, with a clear

gaze and humble heart, lifting their eyes when passing roadside crosses, then crossing themselves, doffing their hat, raising their time- and work-marked hands and saying, “Thank the Lord!”; when they meet each other, their corresponding greetings are: “Jesus be praised!” and “For ever. Amen!”. This is the human model that the pilgrim and religious tourist must come to know, the Christian of Maramures, a beacon of faith, reflected in the clothing style, the houses, as well as within the family and the person’s soul, as God is forever by the side of the individuals who have Him in their hearts.

4. THE TOURISM FUND TO SUPPORT RELIGIOUS AND PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

Attractive landmarks, based on their characteristics, can be classified into natural and anthropogenic. Consequently, there is a natural framework, existing landmarks that are the basis for all activities, and the additional anthropogenic touristic resources represent the peak of creation.

The high point of a pilgrimage is when God – The Son incarnates, in obeisance to the laws of nature, becomes a human being, but without sin, to bring us close to godhood, so that we may become the likeness of God from His image that is within us. Wherever He went, Christ the Saviour blessed that land with His great glory, and Israel became the Holy Land, as the place where Jesus spent the majority of his earthly life, surrounded by the natural and man-made landscapes.

These natural and anthropogenic sites continue to be filled with grace and workings of miracles. In addition to the routes walked by Jesus, there are different areas dedicated to the Blessed Mother and saints, from the oldest records to the present. Each of us must look for the Kingdom of God, wherever we feel closest to it: “*the kingdom of God is in the midst of you*” (Luke 17:21), and there are times when we must travel thousands upon thousands of kilometres, and other times we find very close in our heart: “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Luke 12:34).

4.1. Sacred Natural Tourism Resources

Sacred natural resources can be classified into the following categories: relief, hydrography, climate, vegetation, fauna, lithologic structure, and cosmic factors

When our faith is strong, and we have hope and love, we can move mountains; a secular individual would say nature is at work, but I argue that God works through all that surrounds us.

The natural religious touristic landscape is the landscape of our soul, what we hold within us, the susurrus of a spring, the leaf of a tree, a light breeze, and a raindrop; it can be the landscape where we feel closest to God.

4.2. Sacred Anthropogenic Tourism Heritage

The most attractive anthropogenic resources are those that have a rich history, but few of them had attracting tourists as a main purpose when created; certain buildings have additional uses even now.

We will list some characteristics of anthropogenic landmarks: age, unique aspects, innovative aspects, size and function, or use. The traits can determine whether a tourist will choose a certain package or not.

Religious buildings that have a touristic function are temples, sanctuaries, churches, cathedrals, mosques, synagogues, monasteries, mausoleums, and graveyards.

On a continental level, as well as national level, the churches span a great period of time, having different architectural and building styles.

There are activities that have a religious function, among which religious processions and feast days are included; a great number of pilgrims attend feast days yearly. As it was in the past, activities that have a touristic function represent a great financial challenge, and each year the concerned parties invest a considerable amount of money.

4.3. The Heritage Used by Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism in Maramures

Maramures is sound and colour, not only a place, but a state of spirit, a corner of heaven, where you feel close to God. Human destiny has intertwined with that of the neighbouring woods, and history was not written, it was carved into tree trunks, which were later turned into small wooden churches with steeples that reached the skies instead of grand stone cathedrals.

In the following paragraphs, we will describe the main types of sacred anthropogenic touristic sites found in Maramures, determined based on destination choice. These are: cathedrals, churches, monasteries, museums or religious collections in museums, places of worship for other religions, funeral markers. During this presentation, I will focus the

particularities of these sacred or religious anthropogenic landmarks, while not expounding on the historic element, even if the history for this subject is clear and well-developed.



Fig. 12. “The Holy Trinity” Orthodox Episcopal Cathedral, Baia Mare

In Maramures county, there are 351 churches built of stone, masonry, brick, wood, or other materials.

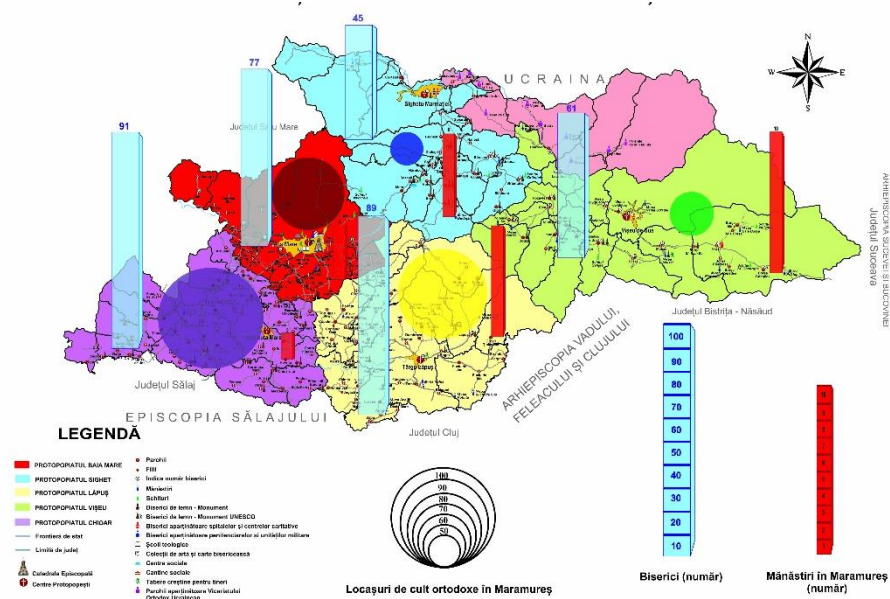


Fig. 13. Distribution of orthodox edifices in Deaneries in Maramures Country

Miracle-working icons have a special meaning, as they are aesthetically pleasing, as well as grace-giving, as God works miracles through them, using the medium of the Blessed Mother, or other depicted saints. There are signs that can signal a miraculous icon: some are weeping, others drip myrrh. Pilgrims usually travel to see them because they believe in their

healing power, and some may start out only curious, and can return a believer, or still unconvinced.

Roadside crosses are crucial for the progress of the pilgrimages, particularly through their significance. It is widely known that these crosses are placed at crossroads to guard against evil.

Funeral markers remind us of our forebears. By maintaining them in good condition and through prayer, we honour those departed before us. From the renowned Egyptian or Mayan pyramids to simple backyard graves, all have the same function.

4.4. Maramures – The Country of the Culture of Wood

The locals are industrious individuals, fair and faithful, and God is always present in their daily lives and in all their stages of life, from birth until death. They have been, are and will be masters of the wood craft, skilled carvers or sculptors. As a learning technique, even if the pupil was illiterate, they would learn from a master crafter, a generational transfer of knowledge, which made the work dearer to the pupil, and the results reflected this. The art of woodworking is as old as Maramures itself, as the inhabitants would build whatever was needed using the materials at hand. Maramures has primary forests, and wood has always been a friend and help to human beings, enabling them to make whatever was necessary. The wood used had a very well-established route, from deforestation to the consecration of a church.

Settlements in Maramures have been built almost entirely out of wood, and the villages are of the clustered type, a wooden universe brought to life through skill and love. In the traditional village in Maramures, the church occupied the central position, usually situated on a hill.

The elements of the traditional wooden gates have deep meanings, as nothing is apparent, or left to chance; the symbols used have been used by other peoples across the world as sculptural shapes and motifs, for example Syria, Egypt, Armenia, Asia Minor; as an anecdotal contribution, I have personally seen the rosettes usually found in Maramures wooden gates in the ruins of the synagogue of Capernaum.



Fig. 14. The ruins of synagogue of Capernaum – Motifs

These traditional motifs are carved on wooden gates, but they are frequently seen in the textile industry, on folk clothing, traditional thin towels, counterpanes, rugs, as well as in pottery, certain bread products, and others.

The gate has a profound spiritual value, as the traditional belief is that the inhabitants of the home would bring back all the evils of the world (diseases, curses, charms) upon their return, and it was only through the passing through the gate would they be purified and cleansed of the corruption of the outside world, thus being fit to re-join their family, their corner of heaven.

The motifs carved on the gates are the rope, the rosette, the sun, the tree of life, the snake, the human face, birds, the pitchfork, the cross, some saints, the wolf, wolf teeth, the zigzag (called “corigăul”), the nail (called “ghinul”), the fir tree, among others.

The motifs were used for a beneficial reason, to bring fortune to the members of the household, as well as visitor, or passers-by. They also demonstrate a strong desire and belief in returning to God, to the Maker, the Creator.

The traditional wooden gates, these triumphal arches to eternity, are unique through the perfect harmony of their size, respecting the proportions of its component pieces, the balanced silhouette of the whole and through the metaphoric wealth of its carvings.

4.5. Wooden Churches – Live Wood Breathes Life

From the small church where Christians in Maramures prayed on their own, we move on to the great family of the Holy Church, where we all run to when we experience the greatest joys, but also the deepest sorrows.

The oldest and best-preserved wooden churches are the churches in Norway, the famous stav-kirke, but there are wooden churches in the Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Moldova.

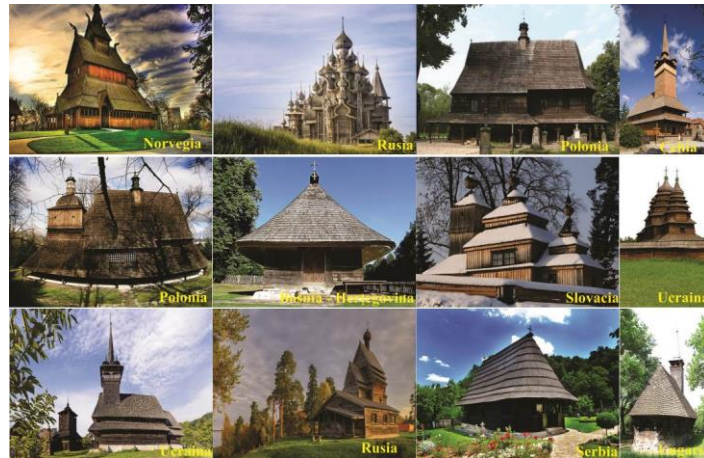


Fig. 15. Wooden churches in Europe – Photo collage

Wooden churches in Romania number approximately 1400 edifices spread across the entire territory of our country; they have several common traits, but, depending on historical region and time of construction, as well as other individual factors, each one has its own story, they each host the Holy Trinity during each Divine Liturgy. In Romania, the church remains axis mundi, as communities have formed around it, generations of individuals have developed, and the true faith has taken root, all of which are defining elements of our national identity.

A wooden church's style is established by its floor plan and exterior design, as these can reflect local influences, be they superficial or not, the time of construction, and the topographical configuration.

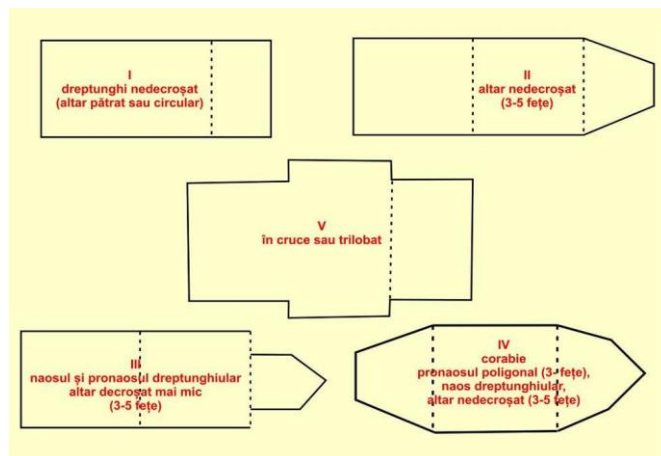


Fig. 16. Types of floor plans found in wooden churches

Another specific element is the shape of the church towers. We have identified seven types: without a tower, or the peasant-house type, with a small tower, with a shingle-covered belltower, with a medium tower, with a baroque tower, with an harmonic tower, with a tall tower surrounded by four small turrets representing the 4 evangelists, or the 4 cardinal points (in the village where that church is located, there used to be a Council of the Elders that had life-and-death authority over the over villagers), and a Maramures tower.

The towers, in addition to their role as location for the church bells and the semantron, have an aesthetic purpose, as well as liturgical significance. They had a more strategic purpose, as guard towers, being the tallest point of the village: their mission was to guard and defend, notify and raise the alarm in case of war, fire, even bad weather. They also have a symbolic role – to protect against and to chase away evil spirits.

The towers slowly became true works of art, and even the church itself became object d'art, as the creative genius of the traditional craftsman become greater with each generation that shared and passed on knowledge and practice.

The wooden churches of Romania, when using the criterion of form, differ very little from each other, even across denominations, as all these buildings are Christian religious edifices.

Wooden Churches in Maramures

The wooden churches remaining in Maramures are attractive touristic sites from multiple perspectives; firstly, for non-religious individuals, the age of the constructions is a strong draw, as some church components date from the 14th and 15th centuries, the remaining churches being more recently built, even quite recently, in some cases, along the valleys in Maramures. Maramures is divided, from an ethnographic perspective, into 4 regions called countries: Maramures Country, Lapus Country, Chioar Country, and Codru Country (literal translation: Thicket Country); the administrative divisions of the Orthodox Deaconries were based on the previous four regions. As Maramures is a unified whole, we will use a unitary analysis for the entire county, focusing on similarities and differences. The traditional Maramures architectural style is a singular one, distinct from other building styles.

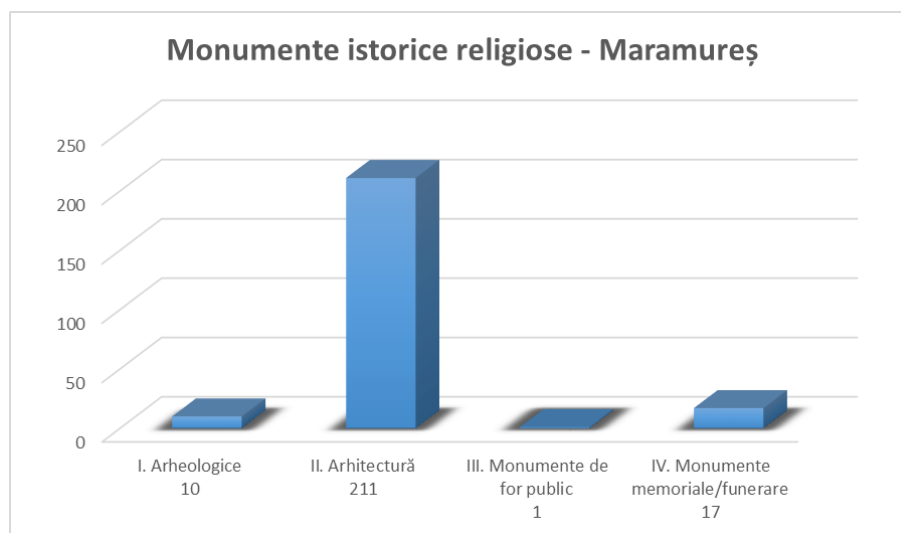


Fig. 17. The distribution of the types of religious historical sites in Maramures

Based on the analysis of the list of historic monuments, we have identified 239 religious ones, further divided into four categories: archaeological, architectural, public use monuments, and funeral/memorial monuments. Of these, 82 are wooden churches, 60 are churches built of different materials, 14 complexes, 8 manses, 7 belltowers, 6 ruins, chapels, Jewish cemeteries, tumulus, denominational schools, roadside crosses, and crosses. We also wish to include The Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance in Sighetu Marmatiei and the Merry Cemetery in Sapanta.

4.6. Specific Elements: Architecture, Painting, Worship

The Architecture of Maramures Wooden Churches

There are small differences between the country-type regions that highlight the features of Maramures wooden churches. The wooden churches located in the territory of old Maramures Voevodate are very impressive due to their monumental size, not unlike cathedrals, but they maintain their proportions. In the Fisculas area, at the intersection of Lapus Country and Chioar Country, the wooden churches recommend themselves through their spectacular towers and the beauty of their roof structures (Plopis). In Codru Country, the wooden churches are smaller, but they are ornamented with fine details and symbols, while the wooden churches in Lapus Country stand out with their beautiful porticos and functional stoops.

The wooden churches in Maramures have 4 rooms: the portico, the pronaos, the naos, and the altar.



Fig. 18. Types of tower shapes – wooden churches in Maramures

The Iconography of Maramures wooden churches

Religious painting is, perhaps, the most important aspect of a church. After the Seventh Ecumenical Council, icons were established as objects of veneration, regardless of the icon materials, so that the saint depicted upon it become the subject of worship. It is impossible to imagine an Orthodox church devoid of paintings.

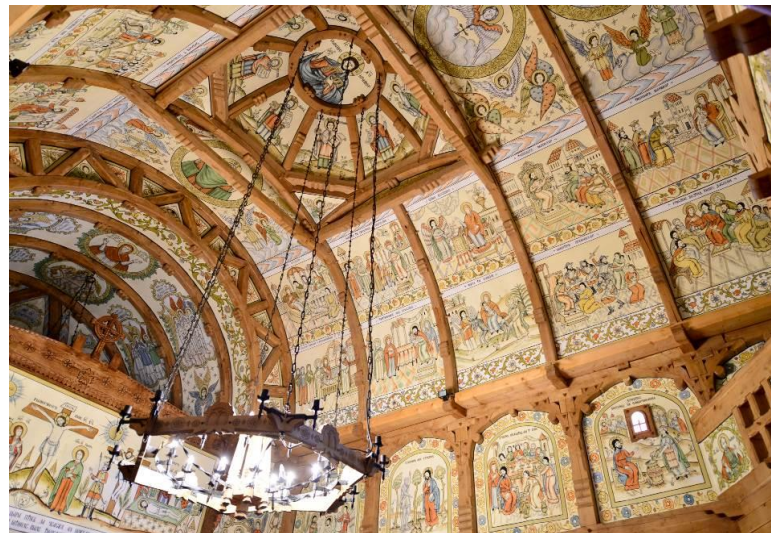


Fig. 19. Painted naos – The Twelve Apostles Monastery in Barsana

Elements identified as specific to iconography in Maramures wooden churches based on a study of the wooden churches declared UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the church paintings present, in a moralizing parallel, scenes from the Old and New Testament. We also draw attention to the leaf and circle flower motifs, as well as Jesus Christ – grapevine.

Worship – the Symbolism of Services and the Divine Liturgy in Maramures

The traditional society in Maramures was very closely associated to the church, as the locals are faithful and religious, maintaining a strong connection to God. They began their life in the church through the Sacrament of Baptism, they would be united to another for ever before God through the Sacrament of Marriage. For any problem, in their daily lives, that could not be solved in society, they would run to the priest and the Church, and at the end of their life, they would be buried in the Church-yard cemetery after the reading of the Burial service, *whatever may arise in your path, accompany it with God*.

All these services have a certain ritual, certain gestures, and actions that the servants of God must observe, certain words and chants that must be spoken, which appeal to the pilgrims. This is one of the methods that can be chosen to complete pilgrimage – attending a service: Liturgy, Holy Unction, Midnight Office, which are part of public worship or through individual prayers, as needed.



Fig. 20. The Epiclesis during the Divine Liturgy

Attending Holy Service, or other services is one of the primary reasons a tourist, a religious tourist, or a pilgrim chooses a religious tour package.

In Maramures, through the call of the church bells and the semantron, pilgrims and tourists are called to attend daily service, either in the morning or in the afternoon, depending on the period in the ecclesiastical year.

4.7. Feast Days, Processions and Pilgrimages in Maramures

Celebretion - Hram (the term for feast day in Romanian), borrowed from Old Slavic and signifying **house**, is the celebration of the patron saint of a church, or the holy day that the church was named after. The day of celebration of the church is decided by the bishop of the diocese, alongside the local community and the priest that builds the church, always taking into account what Saint or Holy Day is preferred by the community.

The Diocese of Maramures and Satmar contains 395 religious edifices, among which there are 30 monasteries and hermitages. 119 edifices are dedicated to the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel, i.e. 30% of the total number. The first church of the Peri-Sapanta Monastery is also dedicated to the Archangels, as were many other monasteries over time, and the custom for newly erected churches was to keep the Feast Day of the old church as primary Feast Day.

The Feast Day itself commences on the eve of, with the Vespers, and some churches, and especially monasteries, will hold an All-Night Vigil, the Divine Liturgy, as well as other specific services if the Saint or Holy Day has an Akathist Hymn, or other dedicated hymn, as are the Apolytikion, and Kontakion dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.



Fig. 21. The incidence of Feast Days in religious edifices in Maramures

Processions are closely connected to celebrating Feast Days, as some processions to monasteries have long histories in Maramures, going back centuries, as communities would travel together in order to celebrate a Feast Day.

The faithful who gather from multiple villages along the route and travel together while singing hymns and praying is a wonderful example of a procession. In the morning, groups would arrive bearing crosses adorned with church flags that have a very specific function during Feast Days, and the groups would then gather before Matins and circle the church three times while singing hymns and praying.



Fig. 22. Feast Day celebration at the Twelve Apostles Monastery in Barsana

Pilgrimages in Maramures can be classified into two categories: Feast Day pilgrimages and regular or traditional pilgrimages.

Feast Days, processions and pilgrimages in Maramures are interconnected. I posit that they are not meant commercial purposes, as they are made for the hearth and soul, and the religious feelings, the grace acquired, the positive emotions lived during these experiences cannot be put into words.

4.8. Material Resources for Religious Tourism

Tourism infrastructure represents all goods and means through which a territory's public-appealing resources, both natural and anthropogenic, are capitalized for touristic purposes. Romania enjoys a healthy amount of tourism, and Maramures is a region where both inbound and outbound tourism are practiced.

Tourism infrastructure includes accommodation facilities, food services, touristic transport, medical and spa facilities, and auxiliary amenities.

Tourism trips are a consequence of the natural and anthropogenic tourism potential combined with the infrastructure implemented to support different types of tourism.

Tourism is a human activity, and natural and anthropogenic resources, different methods of communication, accommodation and food services are the main pillars.

There can be no tourism unless there already is a decent tourism infrastructure in place to offer a minimum of professional products and services.

In Maramures, the accommodation capacity is increasing, which is encouraging. While accommodation was capped at 4095 bed-places in 2010, in 2020 the number of available bed-places was 5425, which means an increase of 1330 bed-places, almost 30% in just 10 years.

The subject of this thesis is religious and pilgrimage tourism in Maramures, and I will analyse only the accommodation and food services that religious and pilgrimage tourism make use of.

Numerous monastic complexes have their own accommodation facilities and on-site food services, which is convenient for developing pilgrimage opportunities. When a pilgrim chooses this type of pilgrimage, they must be made aware of all the exact particulars of the offer.

The Archontariki (the Guest House) is the dedicated accommodation facility within the monastic complex, but the accommodation capacity varies from one monastery to another, which is also applicable to the comfort level. Therefore, there are monasteries that have one 24 bed-place room with a common bath for all, and there also are monasteries where rooms can be rented as single rooms with bath; consequently, room rates are also different.

Meals are served in the refectory, or dining hall, which is an enclosed space similar to a restaurant, but there are cases when tourist groups can have their meals on the terrace in the summertime.

Accommodation facilities and food services used in religious and pilgrimage tourism can be located near the religious and cultural landmarks. Room and board can be provided by the majority of monasteries in Maramures, at no cost for the most part, the only reward desired for, but not expected or requested are donations, using the same principle of the Parable of the Good Samaritan; by this method, donations received are used to provide meals to pilgrims who cannot afford them, and cannot repay what was offered to them.

Means of Transportation in Maramures

The telecommunications network and the transport infrastructure play a crucial part in tourism. There is a direct correlation between establishing the transport infrastructure and an uptick in tourism revenue. If in the past, certain landmarks were hard or even impossible to

access, we are now able to travel across great distances in a relatively short amount of time, depending on the desired itinerary.

The major means of transportation used in tourism trips are automobiles, trains, planes, ships and special transport.

5. CURRENT STAGE IN CAPITALIZING THE TOURISM OFFER FOR RELIGIOUS AND PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

5.1. The Tourism Trip

Maramures is a brand destination sought after on an international level. Maramures is a region where both inbound and outbound tourism are practiced, and by analysing the statistical data we can conclude that inbound tourism is more common.

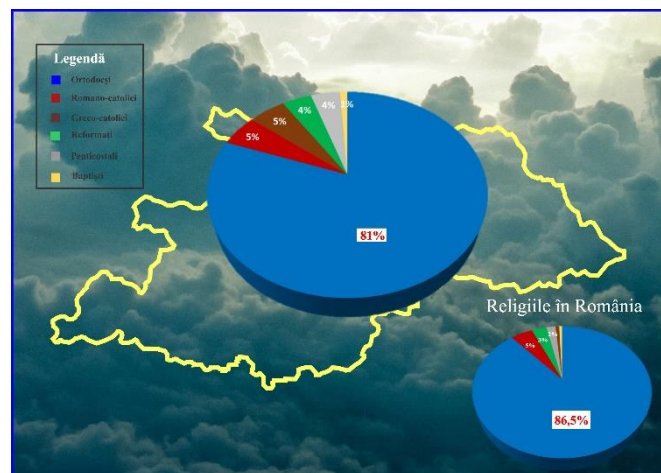


Fig. 23. Percentage distribution of religions in Maramures and Romania

We have gathered significant data using field research, surveys, and interviews. Religious and pilgrimage tourism is one of the top 3 most common types of tourism practiced in Maramures, ranked below cultural tourism, where there are short stops made for religious sites, and mixed tourism, including wellness, therapeutic treatments, and city breaks.

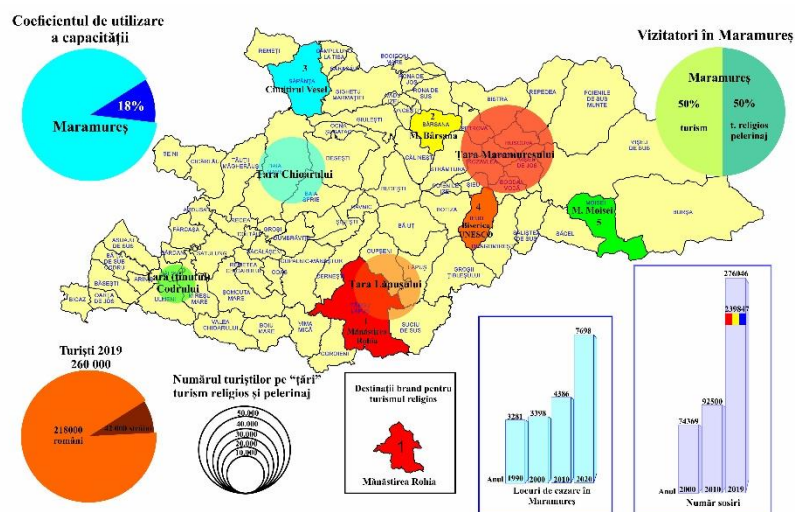


Fig. 24. Significant indicators for tourism trips in Maramureș between 1990 and 2020

The main indicators are the number of arrivals and the over-night stays, which also gives us the capacity utilisation rate.

The capacity utilisation rate in Maramureș county in 2019 was 18.5% below the national average.

We have surveyed 300 individuals, tourists and pilgrims, and approximately 33% were foreigners. 25-35% of our data sample were participating in pure religious tourism, and an even lower percentage, 15-20%, were participating in pilgrimages, including Feast Days, the specific services applicable to certain stages of the pilgrimage itinerary; the countries of origin for the foreign nationals were France, Italy, China, Japan, USA, Serbia, Bulgaria, etc.

On a yearly basis, approximately 1 million Romanian nationals travel outside the country, for an extended stay, and inhabitants of Maramureș are included in this number. The preferred destination countries for non-specific tourism are Greece, Turkey, and Bulgaria in Europe, Egypt and Tunisia, outside of Europe. The most sought-after destination country for religious tourism is Israel, where approximately 50,000 pilgrims follow Christ the Saviour's steps, followed by Greece, Turkey (specifically Cappadocia), Egypt and Russia

The Romanian people has been, is and will be deeply faithful and religious, and Maramureș is, consequently, an internal tourism destination typical for religious and pilgrimage tourism. In Maramureș, the tourist or pilgrim is considered a friend, part of the family and they behave accordingly, maintaining a very close relationship with God and with their neighbour, a two-dimensional work, both horizontal and vertical.

5.2. Types of Religious Tourism

Tourism types are an attempt at classifying activities, based on common traits, and they can be analysed based on the criteria used. The types of tourism are recreational, health, cultural, complex, mixed, and versatile.

Religious and pilgrimage tourism can be included into cultural-religious tourism, or spiritual tourism, but I posit they are distinct. Religious and pilgrimage tourism can be split into three subtypes: mixed or versatile tourism, cultural-religious tourism, and pilgrimage tourism.

When using a tourism package, travellers experiment these types of tourism. Within the same package a tourist may experience religious, mixed or pilgrimage tourism, depending on personal disposition. A package may simply include a complete and complex pilgrimage.

The difference between the cultural and religious aspect is the spiritual disposition of the traveller, their faith.

The forms of tourism reflect the methods used to practice the different types of tourism, and they are specific to all types of tourism.

5.3. Tourism Development, Planning, Capitalisation and Development

Religious and pilgrimage tourism offer in Maramures can be divided into three subgroups. The first subgroup is offers made by foreign travel agencies; these usually include a few monasteries of some renown, and some wooden churches, particularly if they are included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, as well as the Merry Cemetery in Sapanta; the offers themselves are rather sparse, and the information on certain websites differing from what is happening in-situ. However, there are interesting offers containing cultural itineraries, but not religious or pilgrimage-oriented, which makes it difficult for a foreign national, who may have a different cultural and religious background, to fully comprehend and appreciate the depth of the religious sphere in Maramures.

Maramures travel agencies do not possess, to our great surprise, a diverse offer portfolio designed for religious and pilgrimage tourism within the county. Many travel agencies from Baia Mare, Maramures, have only external offers. When they do, rarely, include some religious sites on their cultural itineraries, primarily on Feast Days, the offers are mainly directed towards foreign tourists.

The Christian Pilgrim Travel Agency has a wide range of offers and, in the three years since its incorporation, it has designed several interesting packages: The tour of UNESCO

wooden churches, The tour of miracle-working icons, The tour of historical monasteries in Maramures, pilgrimages to attend specific services, Holy Unction, All-Night Vigil, Liturgy, or Feast Days. Within the scope of religious and pilgrimage tourism there are certain activities that implicate the traveller directly, such as responding with the choir from the kliros, traditional painting, sculpting, pottery, and weaving workshops, as well as classes on playing the semantron, among many others. Tourists receive the pilgrim's guide, name tags, scarves with the agency's logo, and all services are tailor-made, which has led to a small number of pilgrimages, as well returning pilgrim travellers due to the close relationship built between the agents and the clients.

Religious tourism assistance can be provided by licensed guides, clerical guides, priest or deacons that do not have the required credentials, but who can successfully complete all assigned tasks.

Furthermore, the auxiliary facilities for religious and pilgrimage tourism, the religious objects stores and votive candle sales, are quite robust in Maramures county.

The transport infrastructure is currently being modernized. We hope that it continues to be developed apace, as transport infrastructure is a key component of development for a touristic area, and the Baia Mare airport should increase their offer, and diversify their destinations.

5.4. A Mixed Quantitative/Qualitative Analysis, Man as Axis Mundi

To correlate offer and demand, we will analyse a survey applied to 300 individuals, of which 200 were Romanian. Pilgrims focus on their spiritual wellbeing, on the overall mood of the group during the duration of the trip, which was confirmed by the survey data, as well as multiple anecdotal accounts of pilgrims and tourists.

The approximately 300 tourists and pilgrims surveyed had travelled to all corners of the world, from the ancestral monasteries of Maramures, to far-off countries in Africa or South America. Nearly 70% of travellers had participated in internal pilgrimages only, which leads us to speculate that they did not have the opportunity to take a trip longer than a week, or had insufficient financial resources, or were afraid of flying, or their health or physical condition did not permit it, or it may be that they found what they had been looking for in an internal pilgrimage. **It is not being in Jerusalem, but living a good life there that is praiseworthy** (Saint Jerome). Where a person finds what they were looking for is highly individual, and what they seek must be something deeply spiritual. Outside Romania, the pilgrims had travelled to

Israel, Greece, Cappadocia, Egypt, and Italy, these countries being included among the desired destinations the surveyed wished to visit, including those who had already been there, in order to be filled with grace once more.

The reasons for pilgrimage are varied. We will list the most frequently used by the surveyed tourists: *looking for inner peace, advancing in matters of faith, reconfirming one's faith, spiritual solace, prayer, the need to connect to God, a desire to know, to discover, looking for answers to serious issues.*

The pilgrimage has a deep **meaning** for those who are involved: *the radiant path of prayer and communion with God, walking a sacred path together, an opportunity for spiritual enrichment, for prayer and communion, being close to God, receiving faith teachings and spiritual guidance, meeting with Christ, a door to find/reconnect with one's self, disconnecting from the profane, immersion in prayer, spiritual warmth, grace and spiritual comfort, relaxation.*

Whenever one of us does an action, we expect certain results. These are very difficult to put into words, but I wanted to see how the tourists surveyed perceived the **results of the pilgrimage**: *an awareness of the fleeting nature of life, of one's purpose in life, closeness with God, liberation, increased spirituality, peace, joy, silence, spiritual solace, spiritual enrichment, reconfirming one's faith, inner peace, consolidating the relationship with God, thanksgiving, consolidating relationships within the live church, power to move forward, strengthening the faith.*

These answers allow us to deduce that some pilgrims are capable of identifying, to a degree on par with researchers, the similarities and differences between religious tourism and pilgrimages, while others consider them to be the same, as there are no or very insignificant distinctions, and they serve the same purpose.

During the pilgrimages, some pilgrims have had something miraculous happen, or prayers answered, while others did not, as they did not see them, or were not prepared to receive them, or it would not have served them, or saved them. Among the miraculous events that occurred, there are healing, becoming fertile, spiritual peace and quiet, finding the answers to anxiety-inducing questions. **It is a miracle that we wake up every day, we see the sunrise, have good health and are close to our loved ones. Let us give thanks to God!**

We give prayers of asking, thanksgiving, repentance, praise, and we oftentimes remember God and his saints only when we are troubled or old, but it is better to unhesitatingly answer the call of Christ later than never.

Maramures is a brand destination for religious and pilgrimage tourism, both nationally and internationally. Based on pilgrims' preferences, the five best religious brand destinations are Rohia Monastery, Barsana Monastery, Sapanta Peri Monastery, the Merry Cemetery and the Orthodox Episcopal Cathedral in Baia Mare. Four of these sites are Orthodox religious edifices, some newer, others older, but even the newer ones are built on monastic sites with records going back centuries, and the other landmark is a globally unique cemetery, where death was met with derision.



Fig. 25 Religious brand destinations in Maramures

A pilgrimage has many meanings, multiple types of completion, so we will list some heartfelt words that best describe what happened on the journey. *Faith, love, hope, prayer, repentance, nourishment for the soul, devotion, humility, emotion, spiritual enrichment, contentment, meeting God, peace, introspection, relaxation, fulfilment, quiet* were the words most frequently used by pilgrims to describe a pilgrimage. To idealize the pilgrimage, we need words that can transpose the spiritual component so that we may reach where we cannot see, only feel and experience, for salvation.

Where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. To find ourselves, we sometimes traverse thousands of kilometres. The answer to this search can be in a particular place, be it the Holy Sepulchre, the River Jordan, Mount Athos, Aegina, the Monastery of Choziba, or Barsana Monastery, or it can be in any other place, where the connection between man and God has intensified and reached its zenith, and it may be inside us, and then we just need to find it.

Man makes the place, and a few descriptions are asked of pilgrims about the individuals they were in contact with, the clergyman, the tourism guide, the group coordinator, director at the pilgrimage travel agency. The travellers are provided with questionnaires for service improvements, in order to correlate demand with offer, to further and deepen the aspects most relevant. Fine words make us more responsible, small imperfections motivate us, not to be the best, but to become better, to open wide the doors of the soul.

5.5. The Emotions of Pilgrims and Religious Tourists



Fig. 26 The emotions of pilgrims

Each participant, when they start their pilgrimage, has a certain mindset and emotional tone: to give a prayer of asking, of thanksgiving, of praise, of repentance; these prayers are for each pilgrim, for themselves or their loved ones, either living or departed. This is where the ego of man comes to the forefront, as it depends on emotion, and God will uncover much for one who searches during the times and places of that pilgrimage.

There is an emotional state before pilgrimage, another during it, and yet another after its completion. For the tourism trip to be a true pilgrimage, the pilgrim must experience all three emotional states. **All pilgrims are tourists, but not all tourists are pilgrims.**

A pilgrim who is completing a pilgrimage is one who experiences the three emotional states, from the original idea until long after having returned, or even for ever.

In my opinion, the icon depicting the authentic pilgrim shows the pilgrim kneeling, holding a burning candle while praying though crying, or crying through praying, who lives with others and for others, maintaining a clear and serene gaze. What can be more impactful than the Christian in Maramures, dressed in their best Sunday folk clothes, who, before going home, kneels before the church and kisses its consecrated wood wall, crosses themselves, lifts their eyes to the heavens and says *Lord, help me!*; this is the religious Maramures, the land of true and living pilgrimage, that will live on forever.



Fig. 27. Praying youths in Lapus Country

Let us return from all the pilgrimages of this life, as did Luke and Cleopas, to the grace of God and our salvation.

6. THE SACRED LANDSCAPES

**Culture changes landscape, and culture is embodied
by landscape (Nassauer, J., 1995).**

A miracle performed, or a wish fulfilled can be the ideal sacred landscape for the person who had the miracle performed on them, the landscape being an icon without any particular artistic value, but through which the depicted Saint performed the miracle, and therefore we propose the **ABCD model** (Abiotic-Biotic-Cultural-Spiritual (the word used in Romanian is Duhovnicesc)).

The sacred landscape is a complex phenomenon, wherein geography is closely connected to theology, ethnology, and history.

Sacred landscaped are, for the greatest part, limited spatially to one or several similar elements within a region, a city/town, or a country, but with deep spiritual meaning.

Sacred landscapes are part of a whole. The charm of the place is further enhanced by background, and secondary elements, which together create an authentic sacred Maramures landscape. There are specific objects that would lose their value and beauty if removed from the landscape.

6.1. Ceremonial Landscape

Within each country, a religion is observed by the majority of the population, and there are religious edifices for this main religion, alongside those of minor religions. Within Maramures, the majority of the population belongs to the Greek Orthodox religion, which means there is, in almost every village, an Orthodox church, even if there are edifices for Catholics and even the Jewish faith.

The description below includes the main elements of the landscape, but they cannot be analysed separately, but within the ABCD framework (Abiotic-Biotic-Cultural-Spiritual). Another element is the natural environment where all buildings are located; there is also the cultural side of tourists and pilgrims, and the spiritual and emotional states of each individual.

In this landscape there is never just one element: for example, the focal point in a cultural landscape is churches, cathedrals, monasteries and hermitages, roadside crosses, crosses, edifices for the other religions, or other elements as a main component, but there are secondary components, such as the natural landscape, that enrich the main component.

6.2. Sepulchral Landscape

Graves have an important religious function; through taking care of the gravestone and through prayer, we honour those departed before us. From the renowned Egyptian or Mayan pyramids to simple backyard graves, all have the same function.



Fig. 28. Sepulchral landscape

6.3. Temporary Sacred Landscapes

Temporary sacred landscapes are periodic representations of the religion, or with a certain frequency, usually once a year. Religious pilgrimages and Feast Days have been organized from the oldest times. During these activities, the ABCD model can be noticed. The event itself occurs in a certain place, the participants are clergymen and laymen; they each belong to a culture and have certain trainings and education, and they are motivated by spiritual needs or desires: they participate to make wishes come true, they give prayers of asking/request, praise and thanksgiving. During the pilgrimage, or the religious program, those involved will consume resources.

Feast Days represent the joy to meet with your loved ones, as Hierarchs consider their family to be the true believers. Therefore, Feast Days, in addition to the component geared towards attracting foreign pilgrims, has a deeply connecting dimension, providing the place to reunite members of the same community, particularly the children of the villages/town who left for other spaces.



Fig. 29 Feast Day at “The Holy Trinity” Orthodox Episcopal Cathedral, Baia Mare - 2021

Each Feast Day has a localized specificity that sets it apart from other Feast Days, a small nod to region specific customs and traditions, a so-called un-sinful pride, meant to bolster the spirit of the community: whatever the small act in question, it only occurs for that particular Feast Day in their midst. *Cu cântare de mărire/ Plecăm azi la mănăstire.* (Approximate translation for rhythm purposes: *Singing hymns we go/ to the monastery*).

Classification based on spatial and dimensional perspectives: sacred landscapes: one object/ one sacred element: church, cross, crossroads cross, but as part of a whole; sacred complex – Barsana Monastery; sacred village: Barsana, Rohia; sacred city: Jerusalem; sacred region: Maramures; sacred country: Israel – the Holy Land.

7. PRACTICAL MODELS FOR RELIGIOUS AND PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

7.1. Travel Agency/ Pilgrimage Agency

There are numerous similarities between a travel agency and a pilgrimage agency, but there are also differences; in some cases, the services are the same: room, board, and transport. Auxiliary services are different, and they are presented from the perspective of a professional of geography, tourism, and theology. If a tourism program is meant to prompt positive emotions, within the confines of a pilgrimage, we aim for spiritual experiences. If a tourism tour focuses on the historical aspects of landmarks, on legends, for a pilgrimage, we will focus on the lives of saints, on the miracles they have worked, the history of salvation, and what we can do to be received in the Kingdom of Heavens.

The international, European, and national tourism market need both types of agencies: travel and pilgrimage. Depending on their circumstances, individuals will visit the travel agency to book a holiday trip, and the pilgrimage agency for a spiritual programme.

7.2. Implemented Tourism Projects

The Diocese of Maramures and Satmar, as owner of the majority of anthropogenic religious tourism landmarks, churches and monasteries, is active in developing the pilgrimage and religious tourism, and attempts to preserve and restore the churches.

The Diocese of Maramures and Satmar, through the Pilgrimage Bureau, the Association “Pilgrim to Maramures” and the “Christian Pilgrim” Agency contribute to the aforementioned directions from their inception.



Fig. 30. The Maramures Guided Tours team- 2021

The structures used for pilgrimages and religious tourism are dependent on the parishes that manage the churches, therefore, the partnerships with the major institutions in the county have been renewed: Maramures County Council, Baia Mare City Hall, as well as other mayoral offices where projects are still ongoing, Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism, the major cultural institutions in the county, museums, and others.

The projects, in a similar way to the development strategies, are either short-, medium- or long-term. We will list some of the projects that have been implemented, are being implemented, or that will be implemented.

Implemented Projects: The tour of wooden churches in Northern Transylvania - Maramures, Maramures – Sacred Land – Guide, The village of our childhood in Desesti, Maramures Guided Tours, QR codes, Cultural religious tour of wooden churches and monasteries in Maramures and Satu Mare – Road to holiness, which is part of Cultural religious tour of wooden churches in Romania; Cultural religious tour of miracle-working icons in Maramures and Satu Mare; The Days of the Pilgrim, 1st Edition; Let us discover Maramures together.

7.3. Pilgrimages in and from Maramures

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land – When we decide to organize a pilgrimage, we choose the location first. It is chosen based on requests from pilgrims, but the most profound and intense pilgrimage for Christians is *Following the Saviour's Steps in the Holy Land*, and it will alter the fortunate pilgrim's perceptions, ideas, beliefs and feelings.

Carrying out a pilgrimage is the high point, the moment long awaited for by all pilgrims, but before discussing the main moments of the pilgrimage, we must mention that the tour guide must prepare, researching all perspectives, be it theological, historical, spiritual, and moral; they must have a well-rounded training, as this is the most important component among the services.

Significant moments during this type of pilgrimage: Liturgy at the Holy Sepulchre, entering the Holy Sepulchre, the Way of Sorrow, boat trip in the Sea of Galilee, riding donkeys alongside Bedouins in the Judaeen Desert, swimming in the Dead Sea, Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and the Sea of Galilee, stepping into the River Jordan for a blessing; these are just a few activities; each pilgrim describes the most emotional moment, when they met Christ. A pilgrimage to the Holy Land changes some people, while greatly moving others. What a blessing it can be to touch the spot where Jesus Our Saviour died and was resurrected.

Pilgrimages in Romania have been practiced for centuries in multiple Christian religions, Romania is the Garden of the Blessed Mother, or, as another individual said, if we rearrange the letters in Romania we could write “Man in heaven” (Om in rai – in Romanian). There are numerous religious landmarks on the territory of Romania, as our ancestors had converted in the apostolic times, due to the efforts of Saint Andrew the Apostle. For this offer, we have grouped the landmarks based on historical regions: Moldova and Bukovina, Dobruja, Muntenia, Bucharest and its environs, Oltenia, Banat, Crişana, Transylvania, Apuseni area, Maramures.

Pilgrimages in Maramures have been occurring in an uninterrupted manner for hundreds of years. Regardless of the historical context, the weather, and personal health concerns, Feast Days were attended religiously, as they were grand event, comparatively, and awaited year-long. When we think of Maramures, our mind conjures up traditions, customs, faith and the numerous wooden churches and monasteries. It is a brand region of Romania, where the church is the greater family, and family is the smaller church, a very close and inseparable bond.

The tradition of pilgrimages, uninterrupted for hundreds of years, is kept alive at Moisei Monastery, for 100 years at Rohia Monastery, and also at other monasteries where the monastic life was revived, or for newly constructed monasteries. For each of them, on their Feast Day, special services are held, so that the pilgrims may find themselves nest to Christ.



Fig. 31. Model posters – Pilgrimage in Maramures

Religious and pilgrimage tourism is more complex in Maramures. When researching for this thesis, I noticed that the studies reviewed indicated that the majority of religious and pilgrimage tours would allocate 1 or 2 days to Maramures, 2 or 3 monasteries would be visited (from the ones mentioned above), as well as 1 or 2 UNESCO churches.

Maramures has religious and pilgrimage tourism offers meant for all ages and social backgrounds

Alongside the lengthier programs, aimed at Romanians and foreigners, one-day pilgrimages are offered, and they include attending the Divine Liturgy, Holy Unction or another service, as well as visiting other 2-3 churches and monasteries that we passed by on our itinerary. One-day on Valea Izei: Barsana, Dragomiresti, Moisei – attending Holy Unction. One-day in Lapus Country: Rohia – attending Divine Liturgy, Rohita, Rogoz, Plopis. Similar one-day programs can be organized to cover the entire county, and there would be around 30, as Maramures is an old country with unmatched people.

Another type of pilgrimage is one meant for study or gaining a deeper understanding of the spiritual life. These can be made individually, or in very small groups, non-organized, and we can stay on the Monastery premises for 1-2 weeks. The pilgrims actively participate in the monastic life, they work while listening and praying, take part in folk art workshops (painting,

weaving, sculpting), they contemplate and attend services, which are beneficial both for the soul, as well as the body.

7.4. Pilgrimages and Religious Tourism in Times of a Pandemic

Beginning with 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic has descended upon the human race. Financially, all sectors of activity have been impacted long-term, and we cannot approximate when and how the situation will return to normal. We were confined for a month in Romania, and I respected all the restrictions imposed on us in order to protect us.

With regards to tourism, particularly religious and pilgrimage tourism, the situation has changed dramatically because numerous packages were cancelled or reprogrammed in 2020 and 2021, while external tourism was completely stopped for a time.

It was a difficult period, but it was allowed to pass by God, and what comes from God is all useful and good. It was a turning point, a time for contemplation and role reversals: before the pandemic we would go to churches, icons, saints, and now we have prayed from inside our homes and the Saints have come to us; we saw how in multiple cities processions with miracle-working icons, or with holy relics were held, so that the saints bestow grace upon us, to fortify us and protect us.

We posit that 2022 will be the year we begin our return to a normal status quo, at first from the perspective of the health of the population, and that the economic situation will begin to improve, and all sectors will be relaunched. Israel, after a long period at the head of the statistic for new infections, is slowly getting better due to the measures implemented, and Greece has restarted its tourism activities, while maintaining safety rules and procedures, as it also is in Romania. Let us all do our best to help those dear to us, and our neighbour, “What is impossible with man is possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

CONCLUSIONS

Religious and pilgrimage tourism is quite complex, and we can say with confidence that the hypotheses posited have been confirmed in a high percentage, and the present paper has achieved its goals: the subject matter is very interesting, and there is always something that can be further studied.

The subjects discussed represent a geographic-touristic-theological approach and we consider it is necessary that certain geographical information be collated with tourism and religious data in order to be able to study and debate this theme.

Using the existing methodology as a basis and having applied it in the field for many years, we can present certain practical models that can be sold, similar to the golden calf; they are not perfect, but they are efficient and perfectible.

We strongly believe that there is a clear distinction between tourism, religious tourism and pilgrimages, but I do acknowledge that the differences between them have become less with time, without admitting the possibility of secular pilgrimage, as it lacks a spiritual component and cannot even be considered a type of religious tourism, which means it is another type entirely.

Within pilgrimages, the most important aspect is the spiritual component, the presence of the divine, communicating with the divine, and prayer is heavily used in its many forms. Pilgrimages can be combined with other types of tourism that complement it, such as religious, cultural, recreational, health and experiential tourism.

From a methodological perspective, the life cycle of religious and pilgrimage tourism has 4 stages. These are: *introduction*: wherein researchers focus on the participants, the human being as axis mundi, as central point for the trip and the universe. The second stage is *growth*, where the similarities and differences between tourism and pilgrimage have been analysed, the itineraries have been optimized, a demand-offer relationship has been created. The next stage, *maturity*, pilgrimages are further studied, and it is confirmed that sacred religious objectives constitute the basis for pilgrimages. Exploring all angles, pilgrimages become tailor-made, focusing on generating emotions, feelings, and positive states within the traveller. The relationships between religion, pilgrimage and tourism have been formalized in the same period: pilgrimages are no longer mandatory, it is embarked on from deep desires and feelings, keeping the sacred element at the centre of all activities and placing the pilgrim into a third space, one found between this world and the next, as is offering a preview for eternal life. The last stage is the one we operate in, *rejuvenation or decline*, a period for new strategies. New forms develop alongside the existing ones, and this is the stage for updating the deeper message,

making it understandable for all, considering this is about a Christian religion, and a God of forgiveness and love.

The traveller's feelings, emotions and emotional state are prioritized during the religious tourism program and pilgrimages. In addition to discovering about the historical Jesus Christ, during a pilgrimage we discover living Jesus, the light of the world, with His own identity, maintaining His original meaning and depth. The life cycle model helps us better understand the changes that took place within religious and pilgrimage tourism; however, the human being remains the centre of all activities, and the reasons, stages, the immaterial spiritual component as main activity, the depth of the pilgrimage, must be kept, but with a message, a presentation updated to the current times. Man's relationship with God is the central concern, all studies, all infrastructure, as well as all forms and types of tourism are designed, analysed, and perfected to be better than before, from all points of view.

Both the old and the new paradigm place religious elements at the centre of the journey, alongside spiritual states, and there is an evolution from subjective to objective. A pilgrimage is based on saving and sacred activities, and it is an interdisciplinary research topic that will never be exhausted.

Having experienced pilgrimages, I feel confident in saying that a sacred site can be approached from a different angle, and the feelings, emotions and emotional states will be different and uplifting; the further we advance with our knowledge, which is directly proportional to the spiritual side, and they develop together, the further we advance on the ladder to heaven.

Religious tourism is very close to pilgrimage, and they both have origins in pre-Christian times, but they flourished once the Saviour came – the Eternal Pilgrim who, immediately after resurrection, travelled in a pilgrimage with Luke and Cleopas to Emmaus.

Pilgrimage sites across the world were not sacred initially, and the process to consecrate it included prayers, miracle-working, the presence of saints, or the presence of God the Triune within human beings. The incarnation of Jesus Christ has changed the history of salvation, brought us from death back to life, from the earth to the heavens, from His death on the cross to resurrection. The pilgrimage takes place in a sacred place in a sacred time spent with God, Kairos.

We approach the pilgrim vs. tourist dilemma from two perspectives: the actors involved in the tourism phenomenon, and the traveller themselves. A pilgrimage completes its function if, in addition to the services and personnel involved in its organization and implementation, it reaches the pilgrim's mind and soul and it contributes to achieving the purpose of the trip,

before, during and after the pilgrimage, together constituting one work: pilgrim/tourist-God-guide.

In the Old Testament, pilgrimages were mandatory, and the Jewish people had to participate in a pilgrimage three times per year, on the occasion of important Holy Days. Once the Saviour came to earth, making a pilgrimage was no longer mandatory, and it became a blessing/joy, something that perfects you if you accomplish it; the joy does not originate in visiting a sacred place in a sacred time, but it stems from being filled with grace in that space, and the importance of this lessened in time, varied from pilgrimage to pilgrim

Once Christians became free from all onus in 313, by St. Constantine's will, and St. Helen, his mother, built 18 churches that have become pilgrimage sites, and she is considered the first pilgrim and Christian archaeologist. Afterwards, the pilgrimage phenomenon continued to grow. It reached our territory, as the inhabitants had been converted through the efforts of Saint Andrew the Apostle; the religious phenomenon and the church structures present on today's territory prove our Christian past, and historical documents, churches and monasteries have been witnesses for over 2000 years, several of which have been recognised by varied competent institutions, but their renown is proven by the number of pilgrims and tourists that visit them.

Global pilgrimage in today's world is in continuous expansion and development, particularly due to the evolution of technology that allows us to reach distant landmarks in a relatively short time.

The main destinations for Christian religious and pilgrimage tourism are the Holy Land – Israel, Egypt, Cappadocia, and Greece; other great religions have sites that are considered holy and grace-giving.

Romania, as well, is a pilgrimage destination, as it is considered to be the Garden of the Blessed Mother, and each year it is visited by a great number of tourists, who choose destinations in all geographical areas: Moldova, Bukovina, Transylvania, Oltenia, Muntenia, Dobruja, Banat, Crişana. Each of these regions recommends themselves through distinct characteristics, from their history, architectural style, painting, traditions, and customs. What unites them is the way of life, the people's experiences, and their relationship with God.

Maramures, the primary area of study for our thesis, is a distinct historical, cultural and ethnographical region, which is the heart of religious and pilgrimage tourism in Romania, from the perspective of tourist appeal. There are numerous religious and pilgrimage landmarks that have a high degree of attractiveness, and they are visited by tourists and pilgrims. Many tourists

and pilgrims associate Romanian religious tourism with the wooden churches and monasteries in Maramures, as they are an international brand.

Maramures is home to 8 wooden churches that belong to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, as well as over 100 landmarks included in the list of national monuments, 7 of the 10 tallest wooden buildings in the world, and some unique landmarks, such as the Merry Cemetery in Sapanta; all these sites bring un-sinful pride that is added to the warm and clean, religious and faithful soul of the Maramuresan (local inhabitants), as if they had stepped down from an icon, radiating saintliness.

Maramures, blooming land,/ you are radiant during celebrations, these 2 lyrics makes us think of eternity. This territory has given the world a multitude of notable individuals, hardworking human beings, but sacred: their life is lived in close connection with the divine, and each meeting is a celebration. The main moments of life are closely connected to the church: the baptism, the wedding, and the funeral. When meeting Christ, they wear their best folk clothes and the vestments of their soul are immaculate, having been purified through penance and Holy Communion.

Maramures is the cradle of authentic Romanian orthodoxy, which can be described in many ways that can be summarized in one sentence. The sound of bells or the semantron call the faithful to church in the morning. We can see how the faithful walk to church, with a clear gaze and humble heart, lifting their eyes when passing roadside crosses, then crossing themselves, doffing their hat, raising their time- and work-marked hands and saying, “Thank the Lord!”; when they meet each other, their corresponding greetings are: “Jesus be praised!” and “For ever. Amen!”. This is the human model that the pilgrim and religious tourist must come to know, the Christian of Maramures, a beacon of faith, reflected in the clothing style, the houses, as well as within the family and the person’s soul, as God is forever by the side of the individuals who have Him in their hearts.

The natural and anthropogenic sacred heritage of Maramures is made up of cathedrals, churches, monasteries, museums or religious collections in museums, places of worship for other religions, miracle-working icons, crossroad crosses, and funeral markers. 100 wooden churches stand out, their wood breathing life, a clean, kind and gentle soul to all those who prayed within their walls for hundreds of years, from consecration until now. Maramures is the country of wood, and the inhabitants build around the church, out of wood, their entire universe, whatever is needed: the gate, the house, and all the necessary utensils, all of them embellished with meaningful symbols that have both an aesthetic function and a protective function, based on longstanding folk traditions.

Wooden churches can be found across the globe, however we have only analysed the ones that fit our criteria: the famous Norwegian stav-kirke, as they are the oldest, Russian churches, as well as churches located in East- and Central-European countries, particularly if they share our borders, as they each had particular elements to recommend them. Within Romania, we have identified the typology of wooden churches in the main historical provinces or regions that possess distinguishing individual characteristics, as well as the wooden churches in Maramures county, subdivided into four types, based on the country-type region they are located in: Maramures Country, Lapus Country, Chioar Country, and Codru Country, but that also at least one other distinguishing feature, such as floor plans, the height of the towers, and architectural shape.

We have described the most important elements that are specific to religious and pilgrimage tourism: architecture, painting, and worship, which are unique to Maramures. The architecture and the painting were thoroughly analysed, based on the characteristics of the period of origin, and traditional folk influences. When discussing worship, we have explained the symbolism of the Divine Liturgy, of the gestures, activities, and the actual text that is read or sung during services. Explaining these traditionally mysterious elements and delving into the interpretation of the symbolism is like an opening of the heavenly gates; it helps the ones who are interested to understand, to feel and to live profoundly through worship.

Participating in Feast Days and processions during pilgrimages is a unique moment that enriches any pilgrimage. The Feast Day is the celebration of the patron saint of a church, received upon its consecration. In Maramures there are 119 churches, more than 30% of the total number, are dedicated to the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel, followed by Feast Days dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, as well as other Saints beloved by the inhabitants of the county. With the occasion of Feast Days, processions are organized, and hymns and prayers are continuously sung, either by those on the move, or by the standing public. These prayers usually begin on the eve of, with the Vespers, and they continue during the All-Night Vigil, and then the Divine Liturgy. Historical monasteries, particularly those older than one hundred years, will receive many faithful who wish to celebrate the Saint, dressed in folk clothes, bearing crosses adorned with church flags, accompanied by priests, and who joined the procession; in the past, this procession would have been made on foot, from the departing location to the monastery and back; at present, the procession is limited to circling the church once or three times. There are two types of pilgrimages in Maramures: traditional pilgrimages that occur during the course of a year, and pilgrimages celebrating a Feast Day.

The religious tourism infrastructure is growing, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and we gladly observe that multiple accommodation and food facilities have been rated. International and national tourism travel are experiencing growth, with the exception of the pandemic-imposed tourism travel bans.

Religious and pilgrimage tourism in Maramures makes use of the entire accommodation and food services infrastructure, and recently numerous monastic complexes have built their own accommodation facilities and on-site food services, called Archontariki (the Guest House) and the refectory. These on-site services facilitate the participation of pilgrims to night services, and due the common nature of the meals and rooms, spiritual debates can occur in an appropriate setting. Traditional craft workshops organized within the monasteries bring added value to the tourism experience.

The development of the means of transport has optimized the duration of travel, and we can cover thousands of kilometres in a relatively short amount of time; access roads to previously difficult-to-reach religious sites have been built, contributing greatly to the development of religious and pilgrimage tourism.

The number of tourists who participate in religious and pilgrimage tourism in Maramures is increasing. The number of tourists that originate in Maramures and travel to the main regions of religious tourism is significant. Nowadays, 1 in 5 individuals aged between 18 and 70 have participated in a pilgrimage to Israel, Greece, or a different destination at least once. Furthermore, Maramures is a brand destination for religious and pilgrimage tourism, and tourists and pilgrims visit to enjoy and discover Maramures as a hearth of faith and spirituality.

Religious and pilgrimage tourism can be further divided into three subtypes: mixed or versatile tourism, religious tourism, and pilgrimage tourism.

The forms of tourism are methods used to practice the different types of tourism; the forms of religious and pilgrimage tourism in Maramures are described based on the following criteria: distance, duration, origin of tourists/pilgrims, number of participants, degree of organization, method of implementation, transport used, age of tourists, social contribution, and the particularities of the destination.

Based on our analysis, of the natural and anthropogenic potential, of the existing infrastructure, we have proposed some directions for development, the most important being strategic directed advertising, creating tailor-made packages and programs, as well as accessing non-reimbursable European funds.

In Maramures, faith and religion are at home, due to the uplifting and unique landscapes. These landscapes have been hotly debated during the past three decades, and we have presented

the ceremonial, sepulchral, and temporary sacred landscapes. These landscapes, while the main elements, cannot be analysed individually, as they are part of a greater whole, and the background (secondary) elements also contribute to create heavenly landscapes, reminiscent of Paradise.

Man is the core element of the tourism phenomenon, in general, and of religious and pilgrimage tourism, in particular. In addition to the services and products a pilgrim or tourist consumes, the feelings, emotions, and emotional states that the traveller experience once on the trip, add an additional depth, as do their expectations, faith, religiosity, and degree of spiritualism.

The reasons that motivate us to begin a pilgrimage vary from curiosity, to searching for the meaning of life, fulfilling a promise, offering prayer, and the working of a miracle.

A pilgrimage has multiple stages; they can be shorter, or longer, or final. A pilgrimage requires a sacred time and space. From my perspective, in order for the pilgrimage to achieve its function, it must always be in the pilgrim's heart and life.

The pilgrimage stages are very important, and they must be observed carefully and at the right time; let us allow time some time. Whatever does not occur in time or happens at the wrong time is not enduring.

The pilgrimage has the following stages: the preparation (before departure), the journey to the sacred place, the progress, the high point, the celebration (visits, prayers, attending services, participating in different rituals, seeing, touching the blessed objects – becoming filled with sanctifying grace), the return home, and the post-pilgrimage pilgrimage, continuous contrition. The social aspect of the pilgrimage is a preview of the kingdom of heaven, as all differences between pilgrims become less as the pilgrimage continues, all participants are equal; God did not work more for some than for others, He loves us equally, and we are all one into Christ.

The physical and spiritual preparation before departing on a pilgrimage must be a together working, of collaboration, and community.

The journey is initiating, maybe we've never been on a plane, and we have certain expectations, doubts over whether we will find what we're looking for, we're going through different trials/temptations, and sometimes the road is hard, we feel constrained by fasting, the prayers, or accepting our neighbour. The pilgrimage group begins to homogenize, the first connections are created, and we become one, the closer we become, the deeper our emotions and feeling become.

The high point, the middle point, is the pilgrimage itself, as we then reach the desired place, and we touch it, and kiss it, and rejoice with our eyes and our soul's eyes, we carry out a certain ritual, our wish comes true, the expectations and imagined feelings can be underwhelming, as expected, or overwhelming: *Lord, it is good for us to be here*. Metanoia occurs, if what we saw and experienced was not as expected, but we must not despair, let us be steadfast, let us allow tie some time, as what we have requested cannot be granted, since it will not be useful or redeeming; if our feelings, emotions, and emotional states are adequate or overwhelming, then let us thank the Lord. Each participant experiences the high point where Jesus Christ allows Himself to be discovered, where the pilgrim meets body, heart and mind, gift with the Greatest Giver.

May the return home be like that of Luke and Cleopas; if on the road to Emmaus alongside Jesus Christ, the eyes of their souls were closed when walking, after they had a sample of God's grace by Holy Communion with eucharistic Christ, they returned home with eyes opened and praising the Lord. It is important to keep vigil so that the blessing remain. The result of a pilgrimage is not visiting a sacred place, but filling your soul with grace, and when returning to the worldly, we must give of ourselves to our neighbour, as that is the only way to be saved, and the pilgrimage has achieved its function.

The post-pilgrimage pilgrimage, the eternity of grace: let us keep vigil in prayer, observe lent, do good deed if we have found the light so that we may keep it and enhance it. In order for a pilgrimage to achieve its main objective, it must produce a lasting change in the lives of the participants, be it small or large, depending on several external factors, as well as the spiritual level the pilgrim feels to have reached on the stairway to Heaven.

We have identified three levels of change: visible characteristics, perceptions and attitudes, the progression from object to subject; if in the past the journey was important, it remains so, but the pilgrim now considers their feelings, emotions, and emotional states to be the most important aspects of the journey.

The practical models presented at the end are verified concepts that had the predicted results through continuous improvements, as the religious and pilgrimage tourism phenomenon needs unity, a common challenge, European Union-funded projects, as they contribute to the sustainable development of this types of tourism, in close connection with complementary types of tourism. We have presented a parallel comparison between a travel agency and a pilgrimage agency that I have founded, respectively Romândria Travel and The Christian Pilgrim. There are some similarities between the two, but there are more differences, starting with the target

audience and the content of the programs and packages designed and implements, the types of advertising used, and the final results.

Organized forms bring added value to achieving medium- and long-term objectives. The Pilgrimage Bureau of the Diocese of Maramures and Satmar included the two counties, and is, perhaps, the biggest organization of its kind, both as territory covered and number of members. Through this Bureau, several great projects were implemented: Cultural religious tour of wooden churches in Romania, Cultural religious tour of miracle-working icons in Romania, Maramures Guided Tours, The Days of the Pilgrim, 1st Edition, and numerous other projects that have benefited pilgrimage and religious tourism, as well as the tourists and pilgrims.

The models for pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Greece, Romania or Maramures were closely analysed and perfected. The models presented have been implemented several times, and the participant feedback has been very positive. We have tried to present all necessary information using as few superfluous words as possible so that the models can be replicated and implemented by scores of religious and pilgrimage tourism operators, on a national and international level.

I imagine the pilgrimage as seeing The Saviour's cross and the light of Resurrection before my eyes, hearing the clang of church bells and mallets striking a semantron, smelling the pleasing aroma of basil, incense, and myrrh, touching the Holy Icons and sacred relics, feeling the taste of Holy Communion be transformed from bread and wine to the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace to those who come, joy to those who stay, blessings to those who leave, happiness to those who can say: I, too, have been to Maramures!

I want to thank all those who I've met during my research, who have supported me during these wonderful and blessed years, those who have assisted me in writing this thesis, with my doctoral courses, God, my family, my friends, the pilgrims, and my acquaintances. To those who are no longer among us, they are with us, they see us, and they rejoice with us. If I have upset anybody, it was not my intention, and I apologize; if I've half-heartedly completed tasks, it was my best at the time; if I've done something well, and as it is meant to be done, that was my intention, because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Amen.