

Pilgrims' Motivation for Travelling to the Iasi Feast

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Abstract

Either due to religious and spiritual motivations or to personal ones, religious pilgrimages have become increasingly popular during the last decades. The article proposes a study concerning the motivations of pilgrims who travel to Iasi every year in October to attend a religious event organized in the city. The main goal of this paper is to present the results of the research concerning the main travel motivations of pilgrims. The issue is whether their socio-demographic profile influences their travel motivations and the extent to which pilgrims' satisfaction is determined by the travel motivations they declare. This is quantitative research which uses a questionnaire survey, based on the data provided by 441 respondents. The results are important for the scholars in religious tourism and for destination managers who use this kind of data to improve their planning and organisational activities of such events.

Keywords

pilgrim, pilgrim's motivation, religious tourism, socio-demographic profile, satisfaction, Iasi Feast

JEL classification: Z33, Z32, Z12

Introduction

People have been travelling since ancient times from one place to another for various purposes: to discover new territories, to participate in rituals and ceremonies, to join certain groups in search for common interests and faith, or to participate in sports competitions. However, visiting sacred sites is considered by far the oldest form of tourism (Raj, 2008). The activities involved by travelling for a religious purpose fall within the religious tourism category, which has been thriving recently because of people's desire to experience new things, to learn something different, to meet new people, to understand each other, or simply to belong to a certain group sharing specific values and beliefs. Religious tourism has been growing rapidly despite the increase in the general education and welfare levels and even though Europeans, particularly those in Western European countries, with a Catholic population majority, have rather detached from religious faith.

Most often assimilated to or even mistaken for pilgrims' journeys to highly significant religious sites, where they could reach God through some ancient rituals and practices, religious tourism motivation was hardly ever studied. An attribute of theologians, anthropologists or philosophers, the travelling motivation for religious tourism and pilgrimage has stirred interest among researchers who search for explanations for consumption behaviour and for new means to manage tourists and sites based on existing, either material or spiritual, resources. Nowadays, religious tourism actively contributes to developing some areas by generating prosperity and labour in the hospitality industry as well as in other related sectors and by creating and promoting values aimed at sustainable economic growth. According to research, pilgrimage tourism alone generates approximately 3 billion dollars per year (Vijayanand, 2013).

Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism

In research studies, religious tourism is either sometimes approached as pilgrimage tourism or includes pilgrimage as a particular type of travelling with the purpose of reaching places with special sites, buildings, monuments that are highly symbolic for believers belonging to various religions. Thus, Vijayanand (2014) considers that tourists are different from pilgrims in the way they spend time at the site. He states that pilgrims are wholly or, at least almost wholly motivated in their travelling by participating in and assimilating new religious beliefs and attitudes at the pilgrimage site. Consequently, pilgrimage tourism refers to people's journeys motivated by such purposes while religious tourism implies visiting sites which are highly significant for believers who, once arrived at the sacred destination, use some of their time there as leisure time. This would be the so-called modern secular journey (Collins-Kreiner, 2016). There are some distinct characteristics, which draw the difference between religious tourism and pilgrimage (Bideci & Albayrak, 2016). For example, the rituals that pilgrims have to participate in do not occur in the case of tourists who visit religious sites out of curiosity or admiration; common activities that tourists can do at the site (tours, leisure activities, spa treatment) do not

appeal to pilgrims who spend their time praying and attending sermons during the visit; pilgrimage destinations are places where miraculous events took place (Vukonic, 1996). However, religious tourists generally visit temples, cathedrals, etc., famous for their architectural beauty, for their ancestry or for other elements defining their uniqueness. Other authors point to the fact that a pilgrimage is based on a variety of factors, such as the mere existence of a sacred place, the inner motivation or purpose of the journey (the purpose to achieve material or spiritual benefits) and people's curiosity regarding that particular place (Hoheisel, 1971).

Pilgrimage is approached by three means or three dimensions related to it (Wu et al., 2018). The first one is defined by Stoddart (1997) as a journey for the soul, a transition from childhood to maturity. Turner (1973) uses the term extroverted mysticism to refer to pilgrimage as a religious intention. In the same line, pilgrimage is the term used to refer to any journey to a sanctuary and to the new communities, which are thus created and consolidated (Crim et al., 1981). In the present paper, pilgrimage is defined as a visit to a site acknowledged as sacred, carried out with the purpose of participating in a religious event, which implies a series of specific rituals (worshipping relics, praying).

Pilgrims' Motivation for Travelling

The research focused on explaining tourists' motivation has mostly relied on the classical motivational and behavioural theories, e.g. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which considered people's needs as essential. Probably the most popular theory in the field of tourism motivation is the one developed by Crompton (1979) who pointed to the existence of inner elements (push factors), which explain people's need to travel as a consequence of their urge to satisfy other needs (to meet new people, to belong to a group, etc.), and of external elements (pull factors), which include the advantages of various destinations that influence them in choosing one over another – its popularity, or facilities.

In pilgrimage tourism, travelling motivations are complex and despite the fact that they also include non-religious factors, they are rather related to Crompton's push rather than the pull factors (Terzidou et al., 2018; Drulă et al., 2012). In this research, authors identify two pilgrim categories, depending on their motivation for travelling: those motivated by external aspects (they use religion, which acts as a tool and combined forms of self-interest, such as the aim to have a social life), to ask for support in times of personal crises (Pargament et al., 2005) and those driven by inner elements, to whom religion represents the essential factor which motivates them and gives meaning to their lives, to whom religion is a way of life.

People's motivations to participate in pilgrimages have traditionally been related to faith (Shinde, 2007) – a faith expressed by their will to participate in different rituals (Griffin et al., 2008; Nyaupane et al., 2015) and to visit places where miracles happened (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). At present, the motivations for visiting sacred places are dynamic and ever changing (Tezidou et al., 2018). They are influenced by the believers' personal performance at the pilgrimage sites and by religious practice, in general. A synthesis of the studies on pilgrims' motivation is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 A synthesis of the literature on the pilgrim's motivation area

Authors	Pilgrims' motivation	Religious tourists' motivation
Timothy and Boyd (2003)	– participating in religious rituals	– visiting sacred places or following traditional routes to see the destinations where miraculous events occurred or could occur, not only to participate in religious rituals and prayers;
Bideci and Albayrak (2017)	– religious persons are more likely to visit a monastery than non-religious persons	– to learn about the history of the place and its uniqueness, the desire to learn something about it and about the nature of the site;
Griffin, Gorman, O'Halloran, and Stacey (2008)	– religious practice, rituals	– 3 categories of tourists, depending on their travel motivations, from tourists visiting the religious site by accident to those who are ardent believers;
Lopez, Lois-González, and Fernandez (2017) Pargament, Magyar-Russell, and Murray-Swank (2005)	– old feelings	– the possibility of breaking the routine, of finding mental renewal and as an anti-stress therapy;
Amaro, Antunes, and Henriques (2017) Abbate and Di Nuovo (2013) Nyaupane, Timothy, and Pudel (2015)	– religious motivations differ according to the socio-demographic profile; – faithful tourists are determined by religious motivations	– pilgrims are mostly motivated by spiritual aspects, by their openness to new experiences and by their interest in nature and sports; – need for socializing in women and need for discovery in men; – the nature and the contextual factors; recreational and cultural aspects are important;
Crompton (1979)	– push factors are important	

Source: own research

Numerous studies show that the socio-demographic profile (factors such as gender, age, nationality) is highly relevant in people's decision to travel to places which are acknowledged as sacred by their religion. Thus, researchers have demonstrated that women have different motivations to participate in pilgrimages compared to men (Abbate & Di Nuovo, 2013) and that nationality and age, as well as other characteristics are highly relevant in visiting, for example, Saint-Nicolas Cathedral in Turkey (Bideci & Albayrak, 2016) or in walking the Santiago de Compostella Route (Amaro et al., 2017). Pilgrims' religious faith was identified as a significantly motivating factor since religious people are more likely to participate in pilgrimages to sacred places (Nyaupane et al., 2015). In

addition, travellers who consider themselves pilgrims are rather animated by religious motivations in visiting sacred places compared to those who identify themselves as religious tourists, who are rather motivated by recreational and cultural aspects. Moreover, the extent to which they feel culturally connected to the groups who own the visited sites is important (Nyaupane et al., 2015).

Modern pilgrims' motivations for travelling to various sacred places (Santiago de Compostella, Jerusalem) have been undergoing some changes, i.e. nowadays, they are mostly driven by spiritual factors, by the desire to experience new things and to enjoy nature and sports (Amaro et al., 2017; Albayrak et al., 2018), by the possibility to escape routine, to find mental renewal, or an anti-stress therapy (Lopez et al., 2017), and even adventure (Blackwell, 2010).

Starting from previously provided explanations related to the impact of the socio-demographic and religious profiles on pilgrims' motivation as well as to the extent to which the former influence the general level of satisfaction of the latter, the focus of this paper is on the study of the motivations of pilgrims who attend Saint Parascheva's Feast in Iasi.

Methodology

Description of the research context

In Romania, there are numerous pilgrimage sites, visited by thousands of believers from all over the country. They are drawn to these places by the fame of some priests, who have either lived or still serve in monasteries and churches, by a painted icon, an artefact or place where miracles occurred, by religious buildings with a captivating past (times when people used to be persecuted), to pray and participate in sermons and feasts or simply to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere of the place (most of these are in isolated areas, in the mountains). After 1989, when the communist regime fell and a new, democratic order replaced it, people were redeemed the freedom of expression and the number of religious buildings increased, both in urban and in rural areas. These were, for example, the Orthodox Churches reaching a number of 16,403 at the end of 2015, which accounts for approximately 60% of the total number of 27,384 churches in Romania (Ionite, 2017). It is also worth mentioning the fact that the main funding source for building churches consists in the sums of money donated by congregants in the parish they belong to. After 1989, the tough transition process from centralized to free market economy brought about difficulties in terms of adaptability and, when uncertainty was at its highest, while looking for hope for a better future, many Romanians turned towards religion to find a refuge. The fact that in Romania religion has been taught in schools for more than ten years also contributes to nurturing a feeling of respect for religion and its values, as well as for religious authorities. Moreover, in a Gallup study carried out at a global level (Gallup, 2012), Romania is on the 6th position in the top most religious countries (89% of the interviewed people declared they were religious), which explains, to a certain extent, the big number of religious buildings existing in the country.

In this context, pilgrimage tourism, traditionally carried out on short distances, has grown ever year. Travellers from faraway cities show a tremendous willingness to attend events held by various churches, monasteries, where feasts are organized so as to create the opportunity for believers to pray to painted icons or to some saints' relics.

An increase in the levels of income and living standard following 2007, when Romania joined the European Union, did not have a negative impact on Romanians' participation in religious practices and rituals. On the contrary, it created the right premises for them to travel more, for longer distances, for religious purposes, on the one hand, and generated sources for creating and diversifying the religious tourism potential, on the other. There are eight Romanian sites on the UNESCO heritage list, out of which half are religious sites: the monasteries in Bucovina, the villages with fortified churches in Transylvania, Hurezi Monastery, the wooden Churches in Maramures – all these serve as a testimony for the important role that churches have played throughout the history of the Romanian people in creating and maintaining the specific customs and traditions of some local communities (UNESCO, 2020).

One of the most visited monuments in Iasi, both during the year and, particularly, on the 14th of October when Saint Parascheva – regarded as the Patron saint of Moldova, a former historical state with Iasi as its capital – is celebrated in the Orthodox calendar. The Metropolitan Cathedral is a representative site for the pilgrimage tourism in Romania. Designed by Viennese architects in a neoclassical style, the cathedral was built by Moldavians' efforts during the 19th century on the former site of two churches, the White Church and Stratenia Church. In 1889, Saint Parascheva's relics were brought there and have, ever since, been displayed in a coffin that pilgrims and believers visiting the cathedral can pray to (ansamblulmitropolitaniasi.ro).

According to the Moldavian Metropolitan Church, the Iasi pilgrimage has become increasingly known and has constantly attracted more and more participants every year, reaching an average number of 150 000 pilgrims who pray at Saint Parascheva's relics in October (Hopulele, 2019). Pilgrims wait in line for as long as 24 hours to reach the sacred coffin where they pray. They can also join the procession organized at the beginning of the feast and are invited to the festive dinner where they can enjoy traditional food. During the same period, other events, such as traditional products fairs, music concerts, guided city tours or guided tours to the churches and monasteries in the area or in Bucovina are organized so as to offer tourists the opportunity to spend their free time in a pleasant and relaxing manner once they have attended the specific religious rituals. A highly significant moment for the religious-cultural tourism in Moldova, Saint Parascheva's feast can prove extremely relevant for the study of the pilgrims' profile, of their motivation for travelling, of their preference regarding tourist products' consumption because it can contribute to better understanding of these aspects and to providing appropriate services, in line with visitors' expectations.

The research methodology

The main aim of this study is to identify participants' motivations for travelling and attending the 14th of October Iasi celebration in 2018, their socio-demographic profile, how it is related to travel motivations and the extent to which general satisfaction is influenced by travel motivation.

The method used is a questionnaire-based investigation. The questionnaire including a series of items is a tool we have used to identify Iasi pilgrims' motivations. The items include statements with hierarchical answers on a Likert scale: from 1 (unimportant) to 5 (very important). The aim is to identify the pilgrims' travelling purpose according to the following aspects:

• Religious reasons (faith):

- To deepen religious feelings the pilgrims have, the need to be closer to God;
- To ask for help (health-related issues, sin redemption, family and kin welfare, general support);
- To express gratitude to God;
- To participate in rituals on a site where, according to some, miracles happened.

• Other reasons (non-religious):

- Cultural-historical reasons: to visit the city; to better understand the history of the place; to attend concerts;
- Personal reasons: to meet new people and to spend time with other people, out of curiosity, to better understand believers, to visit relatives, friends and other acquaintances;
- New experiences: to try something new, to get some explanations related to the religious experience, to participate in different events and was attracted by the idea of participating in pilgrimage, to test the truth stated by some pilgrims;
- For shopping;
- To escape a daily routine: the need to escape a daily routine and to spend free time;
- Traditions: habits.

Another item category enables the identification of respondents' socio-demographic profile: age, gender, marital status, religion, level of studies, and level of income. In addition, data related to the journey to the pilgrimage site, to the number of days spent there, to the allocated budget, to the type of transportation used and organizers of the trip has been gathered. For this purpose, we have used multiple choice answers and closed questions in order to ensure both adequate and valid data, in line with the aims we have set.

After having pre-tested the questionnaire among 20 students and teachers, it was filled-in by 441 respondents – pilgrimage participants – either directly, by the authors of the study or with other people's help (they were previously trained so as to ensure they would be able to provide answers to respondents' questions). The questionnaire was filled-in in Iasi during the 2018 Saint Parascheva's Feast, between 12 and 15 of October.

Hypotheses

In Romania, three decades after the fall of the communist regime (1989), religion is still extremely influential, which was also demonstrated by the Gallup study. Romanians are religious and participate in sermons on a regular basis, they respect and participate in celebrations of different orthodox saints and in pilgrimages.

Based on the research of Gallup and other studies, we shall test hypothesis 1 (H1):

Hypothesis 1: Most Romanian pilgrims consider themselves highly religious/ardent believers.

The studies conducted by some authors (Fernandes et al., 2012; Lopez, 2013) identified religious motivation as a driving force of the travellers' decision to participate in the Santiago da Compostella pilgrimage. More recent studies indicated that the travellers' motivations to participate in the Santiago da Compostella pilgrimage have changed: the need for clarification, spiritual growth, seeking for new experiences, sensations and new life directions, the opportunity to practise sports and enjoy nature are currently the pilgrims' main reasons for travelling (Scnell & Pali, 2013; Oviedo et al., 2014; Amaro et al., 2018).

Based on literature and on the results obtained in other studies on Romanian pilgrims (Mușat, 2018), we formulate the second hypothesis (H2):

Hypothesis H2: In travelling, pilgrims are particularly motivated by religious faith.

A series of research studies (Bideci & Albayrak, 2006; Abbate & Di Nuovo, 2013; Amaro et al., 2017) have demonstrated that there is a significant correlation between the socio-demographic factors and pilgrims' travelling motivation. The authors show that pilgrims' travelling motivations differ according to age, level of education, gender, nationality, which leads us to formulating the third hypothesis (H3):

Hypothesis H3: The socio-demographic profile represents a factor hardly influencing Romanians' pilgrimage tourism motivation.

Pilgrims' satisfaction with various sacred places has been analysed by including some tourism attributes, such as cultural attractions, historical cities, special events, sense of adventure, spiritual self-discovery, brand (Murray & Graham, 1997), as well as pilgrims' overall experience, signs, pilgrim certificates or passports. Other aspects, which also prove relevant in terms of pilgrims' satisfaction on the Santiago de Compostella route include, religion, spirituality, nature and scenery, history, art, sports and other people's company (Lois-González & Santos, 2002). On-site and on-the-road facilities and services are highly important for Australian pilgrims to Santiago de Compostella (Reddy & Selvan, 2020) and for Portuguese pilgrims travelling on the Portuguese Camino route; the latter group including friends' company and sums of money spent daily as indicators in evaluating the overall experience (Fernandez et al., 2012). Just like the research

conducted with the Australian pilgrims' group at Galipoli, a study carried out in 2008 at a Hindu pilgrimage site (Ruback et al., 2008) also indicates the existence of a strong correlation between pilgrims' motivations and travel satisfaction (Hall et al., 2018).

The main purpose of this paper is to identify the strong connection between the travelling motivations of pilgrims to the religious feast in Iasi and the overall satisfaction perceived by the visitors. We thus introduce the fourth hypothesis (H4):

Hypothesis H4: Pilgrims' satisfaction is highly related to travelling motivation.

Results

The data collected from 441 respondents were processed by using specialized software, i.e. SPSS. During the next stage, the database was reorganized so as to meet the need to process the information according to the established aims, i.e. to identify the travelling motivations of pilgrims who participate in the Iasi feast and the extent to which the socio-demographic profile influences their travel motivations, as well as how their motivation influences the general satisfaction with the religious visit to Iasi.

Table 2 Pilgrims' profile

Age	Percent (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
under 18 years old	3	3
19–24 years old	14.1	17.1
25–34 years old	21.9	39.1
35–44 years old	15.6	54.7
45–54 years old	18.1	72.8
55–64 years old	18.5	91.4
over 65 years old	8.6	100.
Gender		
female	50.7	50.7
male	49.3	100
Level of studies		
Primary school	4.8	4.8
Secondary school	7.5	12.2
Vocational school	0,2	12,4
High school	50.8	63.2
University undergraduate studies	29.9	92.1
Master studies	5.0	98.2
Doctoral studies	1.8	100

Marital status	Percent (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
Married	64.9	64.9
Single	27.4	92.3
Divorced	5.2	97.5
Widow	2.5	100.0

Area		
Urban	54.0	54.0
Rural	46.0	100.0

Source: own research

As far as the pilgrims' socio-demographic profile is concerned, the data (Table 2) shows that most of them are older than 45 (45.2%), followed by the 25–34 years old age group (21.9), by the 35–44 years old group and finally, reaching the lowest percent, by the younger than 20 years old group. According to the collected data, most respondents hold high school level qualifications (50.8%), followed by those holding a university qualification (29.9%), and followed by the category of those holding a PhD (1.8%), by those with the minimum educational level (4.8%) or with the compulsory level (7.5%). The pilgrims' profile is quite similar to that of persons travelling to other holy places, like Santiago de Compostella Route (Amaro et al., 2018), for example.

80% out of the participants questioned on whether they consider themselves believers or not gave an affirmative answer: 44.6% said “yes” when asked about their religious faith; we also added in this group those who are believers although they do not participate in sermons on a regular basis – 35.4%.

Table 3 The way pilgrims relate to religious faith

Statement	Percent	Cumulative Percent
He/She considers himself/herself a believer	44.6%	44.7%
He/She considers himself/herself a believer but does not participate in sermons on a regular basis	35.4%	80.0%
Neither a believer, nor a non-believer	16.3%	96.4%
Does not consider himself/herself a believer	3.2%	99.5%
No answer	0.5%	100%
TOTAL	100	100

Source: own research

Out of these, 16.3% state that they are “neither believers, nor atheists” and only 3.2% state they are non-believers (Table 3). These results confirm the data provided by the Gallup study according to which 89% of Romanians are believers, placing our country among the most religious one in the world (Win-Gallup International, 2012).

As far as the pilgrims' travelling motivations are concerned, the results show a high score for the items which refer to religious reasons (Table 4).

The items describing religious motivation (items 1–8) were selected and adapted according to the model used in other studies (Amaro et al., 2018), i.e. by using statements regarding pilgrimage participation motivation; a Likert type scale was used in order to score the answers (from 1 to 5, 1 = the least important, 5 = very important). The Alpha Cronbach coefficient calculated for the 8 items which refer to religious motivations is 0.851, based on standardized items; none of the scores is lower than 0.60, which is the minimum accepted by researchers for the items to be considered relevant for the model under analysis.

Table 4 Religious motivation for participating in the Iasi pilgrimage - total statistics

Religious motivations/items	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted
Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items: 0.851	4.23	1.384	
The need to be closer to God	4.24	.978	.667
To pray to Saint Parascheva for help	4.32	.919	.665
To show gratitude to God and to Saint Parascheva for health	4.35	.903	.668
The miracles that happened to those who participated in the pilgrimage before me	3.86	2.204	.673
To pray for sin redemption	4.47	3.213	.770
To pray for family and kin welfare	4.47	.793	.681
To show gratitude to God and to Saint Parascheva for help	4.39	.896	.681
The religious experience, the profound feelings they have	3.76	1.167	.693

Source: own research

Personal or other than religious motivations were objectivized by using adapted items from the study carried out among the Santiago de Compostella pilgrims (Amaro, Antunes, & Henriquez, 2018). Individually speaking, these are to a greater extent related to visiting the city, to the hope of improving as a person, to trying something new, curiosity, to the will to understand believers, to interacting with others, history, leisure, to attending concerts, escaping routine, visiting friends and relatives, to the custom of participating in the event and to responding to others' initiative, shopping. The Alpha Cronbach significance coefficient was calculated for each type of travelling motivation and the results are all relevant due to the fact that they are above 0.60 (Table 5).

Table 5 Non-religious motivations for participating in the Iasi pilgrimage

Non-religious motivations / items	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted
Cultural-artistic reasons	2.98	1.482	
Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items: 0.722			
To visit the city	3.45	1.268	.658
To better understand history	3.06	1.211	.620
To attend concerts	2.79	2.055	.680
To participate in a different event and was attracted by the idea of participating in pilgrims	2.63	1.395	.583
Personal reasons	3.18	1.270	
Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items: 0.779			
To better understand believers	3.34	1.169	.697
To interact with other people	3.41	1.176	.700
To visit relatives, friends	2.87	1.364	.751
Participation due to some friends'/family members' initiative	3.11	1.371	.730
New experiences and the need to learn something new			
Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items: 0.786			
To try something new	3.28	1.256	.730
Curiosity	3.14	1.296	.721
The hope that the religious experience will help him/her become a better person	3.95	1.001	.787
To get some explanations related to the religious experience	3.53	1.162	.768
To test the truth stated by some pilgrims	3.20	1.261	.733
Escape from a daily routine	3.08	1.479	
Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items: 0.797			
To relax	3.07	1.248	.665
Leisure	3.01	1.270	.587
Escape from a daily routine	3.15	1.918	.826
Other reasons			
Tradition: Participates regularly, annually	3.08		
Shopping	2.83		

Source: own research

According to the results, an average obtained in terms of respondents' reasons for participating in the pilgrimage was calculated. We may observe that the highest average

was obtained in the case of religious reasons (mean = 4.23): the need to be closer to God, to participate in sermons and prayers, to ask for help and forgiveness, as well as to express hope that people will improve in terms of behaviour and attitude as a consequence of the feelings experienced during the pilgrimage or of religious epiphany and consequent understanding of this epiphany. Among other reasons mentioned by participants, we have found: new experience and learning something new (mean = 3.42), personal reasons (mean = 3.18), escaping from a daily routine and leisure (3.08). Among believers' answers, secular reasons reached the lowest scores: cultural and artistic reasons (mean = 2.98), to visit the city, to better understand the history of the city, to attend concerts, to participate in other events, and shopping (mean = 2.83). Thus, hypothesis no. 2 in the abovementioned studies on the reasons of travelling for pilgrimage is confirmed. Such results have also been reached in other studies (Fernandes et al., 2012; Lopez, 2013; Mușat, 2018).

Hypothesis H3: The socio-demographic profile represents a factor hardly influencing Romanians' pilgrimage tourism motivation.

These results may be explained by the fact that the H2 hypothesis is developed in order to answer this question by identifying some correlations between the participants' socio-demographic profile and the way they relate to religion. The multiple linear regression was described by using standardized Beta coefficients in order to identify the extent to which religious motivation (dependent variable) is determined by the pilgrims' age, gender, area, level of education, level of income as independent variables. The results (Table 6) indicate that these factors are insignificant for most of them (standardized Beta coefficients have low values and the Sig. test is higher than the 95% trust threshold, i.e. $p < 0.05$, respectively. Age is the only significant factor for some of pilgrims' religious motivations: the need to be closer to God, to pray to Saint Paraschiva for help, to pray for health, the religious experience, the profound feelings they have, to show gratitude to God and to Saint Parascheva for help. In our opinion, this is due to the high degree of loyalty and commitment of Romanian pilgrims to religious faith and to church. Consequently, hypothesis H3 has been only partially confirmed.

Table 6 Pilgrims' socio-demographic profile as a determiner of religious motivation

Pilgrims' profile and religious motivations	The need to be closer to God			To pray to Saint Parascheva for help			To pray for health			To pray for family and kin welfare			To pray for sin redemption			The religious experience, the profound feelings they have			To show gratitude to God and to Saint Parascheva for help			The miracles that happened to those who participated in the pilgrimage before me		
	St. Coef. Beta	t	Sig.	St. Coef. Beta	t	Sig.	St. Coef. Beta	t	Sig.	St. Coef. Beta	t	Sig.	St. Coef. Beta	t	Sig.	St. Coef. Beta	t	Sig.	St. Coef. Beta	t	Sig.	St. Coef. Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)		10.46	.000		11.382	.000		11.56	.000		14.61	.000		4.194	.000		6.700	.000		12.743	.000		4.395	.000
Gender	.022	.465	.642	.055	1.153	.339	.046	.957	.339	.033	.687	.493	.032	.657	.512	.037	.769	.442	.035	.721	.472	-.039	-.797	.426
Urban/rural	-.008	-.170	.865	-.009	-.187	.852	.015	.317	.751	-.037	-.764	.445	-.066	-1.355	.176	.012	.260	.795	-.037	-.760	.448	-.012	-.244	.807
Age	.188	3.782	.000	.206	4.197	.000	.188	3.807	.000	.098	1.955	.051	.043	.863	.389	.187	3.782	.000	.101	2.007	.045	.053	1.056	.291
Marital status	-.025	-.506	.613	-.090	-1.833	.068	-.094	-1.896	.059	-.021	-.426	.670	-.047	-.927	.355	-.030	-.612	.541	-.034	-.673	.501	-.035	-.680	.497
Education	.059	1.086	.278	.045	.836	.404	.050	.930	.353	-.024	-.438	.662	.011	.194	.846	-.020	-.381	.704	-.010	-.187	.852	.035	.630	.529
Revenues	-.069	-1.308	.192	-.061	-1.16	.244	-.060	-1.14	.256	.017	.324	.746	-.050	-.934	.351	.066	1.254	.211	-.007	-.126	.900	.033	.617	.537

Note: St. Coef. Beta = Standardized Coefficients Beta
Source: own research

In order to highlight the influence of travelling motivations on pilgrims' overall satisfaction (the item "I consider the visit was worthwhile"), we have carried out a multivariate regression analysis, in which pilgrims' overall satisfaction was considered the dependent variable and the reasons given for travelling were the independent variables. The results are illustrated in Table 7. It can be noticed that, given a 95% trust degree, pilgrims' overall satisfaction is highly influenced by spiritual (to experience something new, curiosity) and by cultural reasons (to visit the city), less by religious (the need to feel closer to God), personal (interaction with other people), tradition-related (the custom of participating in these feasts) and other non-religious (participating in other events) reasons, and least or not at all, by religious reasons. These results confirm findings of other studies (Oviedo et al., 2014; Amaro et al., 2018). Consequently, hypothesis H4, Pilgrims' satisfaction is highly related to travelling motivation has been only partially confirmed.

Table 7 The relation between pilgrims' overall satisfaction and travelling motivations

Pilgrims' overall satisfaction	St. Coeff. Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)		2.476	0.014
The need to be closer to God	0.187	2.261	0.024
To pray to Saint Parascheva for help	0.025	0.250	0.803
To pray to Saint Parascheva for health	-0.008	-0.074	0.941
The miracles that happened to those who participated in the pilgrimage before me	0.012	0.199	0.843
To pray for sin redemption	0.024	0.402	0.688
To pray for family and kin welfare	0.009	0.122	0.903
To show gratitude to God and to Saint Parascheva for help	0.023	0.308	0.758
The religious experience, the profound feelings they have	-0.064	-0.942	0.347
To visit the city	-0.156	-2.386	0.017
The hope that the religious experience will help him/her become a better person	-0.018	-0.263	0.793
To try something new	0.226	2.832	0.005
Curiosity	0.213	2.743	0.006
To better understand believers	-0.059	-0.821	0.412
To interact with other people	0.101	1.436	0.152
Shopping	0.057	0.761	0.447
To better understand history	-0.044	-0.669	0.504
To relax	-0.048	-0.629	0.530
To attend concerts	-0.014	-0.230	0.818
To spend free time/Leisure	-0.044	-0.459	0.646
To escape routine	-0.038	-0.442	0.659
To visit their children, relatives, friends	0.049	0.750	0.454

Pilgrims' overall satisfaction	St. Coeff. Beta	t	Sig.
To participate in a different event but was attracted by the idea of participating in pilgrimage	-0.122	-1.718	0.087
Participates regularly, annually	0.119	1.906	0.057
To test the truth stated by some pilgrims	0.071	1.047	0.296
Other people's recommendations	0.061	0.784	0.433
Participation due to some friends'/family members' initiative	0.064	0.810	0.419

Source: own research

Conclusions

Religious tourism in Romania is currently thriving and will continue to develop during the next years thanks to its revival after overcoming a period when religious practices used to be undermined by the political regime. Unlike in Western European countries, the improvement in the living standards and the social, economic, and cultural integration in the European family did not discourage by any means an interest in religion but, on the contrary, created the right premises for strengthening motivation for travelling for a religious purpose due to the improvements in terms of presentation of the crucial roles of churches, monasteries, and religious events as cultural patrimony. As a consequence, churches and monasteries can contribute to meeting some needs, i.e. to return to some traditional, religious values as well as to satisfy one's curiosity, to spend free time, to learn something new and to experience spirituality, to escape isolation and to find a new meaning in life.

The present research will continue by testing the above-mentioned hypotheses and by assessing a model which will include the religious tourism interpretation methods and their influence on religious tourists' satisfaction as a modelling variable.

The fact that pilgrims are also motivated by non-religious reasons, such as the need to interact with others, to experience something new, to better understand believers, mere curiosity, interest in history, has already been demonstrated in other studies. Moreover, these proved dominant, i.e. playing a significant role in the most recent pilgrimage motivations (Scnell & Pali, 2013; Oviedo et al., 2014; Amaro et al., 2018). However, as this study shows, Romanian pilgrims do not travel to Iasi primarily to simply attend the feast (all events organized by the local authorities are but secondary motivations) and this must be particularly due to their strong faith. In addition, our study shows that the Romanian pilgrims' socio-demographic profile influences travelling motivations only to a limited extent; an aspect which may be explained by the fact that we are a highly religious people, as pilgrimage participants confirmed as well as the findings of Gallup's study state.

The limitations of the present study are primarily given by the possibly of dishonest answers provided by the participants and in the limited sample which does not provide national level data.

Nevertheless, the results are relevant for religious pilgrimages organizers who should also consider the emergence of new motivations, which determine the category of people attending such events. Thus, they can actively contribute to the development of pilgrimage and religious tourism and attract new categories of participants in such pilgrimages.

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