

Types of Christian Tourism

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Abstract

Christian tourism is a sub-type of tourism where pilgrims travel alone or in group as missionaries or pilgrims or to spend their free time to recollect; it attracts a large number of travellers. Christian tourism can be practiced by religious young people, missionaries, participants to religious convents, amateurs of religious cruises, religious camps, visitors of religious attractions, religious adventurers. Christian tourism can be considered a sub-type of religious tourism because of the large number of people involved in this type of tourism worldwide. Christian tourism as a sub-category of religious tourism covers three main sub-types: traditional pilgrimage practiced by most world religions, missionary travel to different areas in the world, and confessional voyage. The structure of hospitality industry is common to all types of tourism but, for traditional pilgrimage, there must be special places for the pilgrims to sleep, eat and pray, because they belong, in most cases, to the medium-income tourist category.

Keywords: religious tourism, Christian tourism, types.

1. Introduction

Religious tourism is defined as “the type of travel motivated by faith or religious reasons” [1-4] or as a special type of archaeological tourism [5, 6], of cultural tourism [7-9], of ethnic tourism, of economic tourism, of physical tourism or of holiday tourism.

Religious tourism can take one of the forms below:

- Youth travel motivated by religious devotion;
- Missionary travel;
- Conference on religious topics;
- Religious cruise;
- Spending time in a remote place (monastery);
- Pilgrimage to sacred places;
- Religious camp;
- Active or adventure tourism with religious topics;
- Religious tourism or inter-generation tourism;
- Holidays;
- Visit to religious tourism attractions;

- Visit to monasteries with or without accommodation.

The goals of religious tourism are shown in Figure 1 below.

Some authors believe that religious tourism is circumscribed to the following three definitions [10, 11]:

- Travel to a religious destination (religious pilgrimage);
- Travel to a religious meeting (religious meeting, religious events, religious conventions);
- Pleasance travel of a religious group (cruise, tour, group trip, fun, adventure, safari, visit of attractions, etc.).

2. Material and method

Religious or faith tourism takes different forms and is practiced by a large number of believers that practice pilgrimage, act as missionaries, or travel for recreation to sacred places. In this scientific paper, the authors analyse the goals, types and subtypes of Christian tourism taking

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into account the structure of hospitality and emphasising cultural religious values.



Figure 1. Goals of religious tourism

3. Results and discussion

Christian tourism is a sub-category of religious tourism but, given the large number of believers of other faiths than Christian, the development of religious tourism products for other religions as well asks us to use the term **ecumenical tourism**.

The structure of ecumenical tourism from the point of view of:

- Travel agencies;
- Associations and institutional bodies (national *tour-operator*, travel associations);
- Governmental authorities (national tourism associations, national tourism organisations);
- *Tour-operators* (their offer) show that **religious or ecumenical tourism** is a **pilgrimage tourism** practiced for hundreds of years and focusing mainly on traditional pilgrimage sites.

Pilgrimage or faith tourism can, in its turn, be divided into three sub-types:

- **Traditional pilgrimage**, a special form of tourism practiced by most world religions;
- **Missionary or humanitarian travel**;
- **Confessional travel**.

The structure of hospitality is common to all tourism types but, in the case of **traditional pilgrimage**, there are special places for accommodation and food for the pilgrims who, in most cases, belong to the medium income category [12]:

- Transport is, entirely or partially, of all types – by air, by sea, by road, by railway – though, along certain sectors of the route, walking predominates; the type of cost is rather within the normal and low cost tariff for the same reasons as above; finally, transport agreements are rather of the charter or bilateral type;

- Tourism trade is controlled by *tour-operators*, travel agencies and tourism associations.

Accommodation and food. The most frequent type of accommodation in religious tourism is the hotel, used by almost half of European tourists, followed by family and friends, bed & breakfast, hostel, tourist’s own house, self-service accommodation, caravan or tent, or a second residence.

Market research. There are no statistics about **ecumenical tourism** at international or national levels. However, we can mention that about 26% of tourists were religious tourists in 2012. If such studied existed, they should aim, in a market research, at the following:

- Traffic seasonality;
- Trip and/or stay purchase models;
- Different types of tourism traffic:
 - Cultural travel;
 - Travel by believers;
 - Business travel;
 - Educational trip;
 - *Fully inclusive tour*;

- Ecumenical itinerary;
 - Tourism package;
 - Participation in conventions;
 - Participation in congresses;
 - Participation in religious meetings;
 - Participation in ecumenical events;
 - Pilgrimage;
 - Fine arts and culture enhancement.
- Tourism pool;
 - Profile of ecumenical tourism (place of origin, age, gender, social status);
 - Purchase facilities;
 - Unique/multiple destination.

Prevalent **cultural and religious values** (pilgrimage centres, religious sites) of the destination (with emphasis on the infrastructure capacity of meeting tourism traffic) are Santiago de Compostella (Spain), Rome (Italy) or Mount Saint Michel (France).

Safety and security factors of **ecumenical tourism** are the same as those of any other type of tourism. Travel formalities are among the simplest given that most European countries with a religious tourism potential are part of the European Union [13-15].

Medical and health insurance for the countries with ecumenical cultural tourism potential is routine one; however, Romanian tourists that pay very small amounts of money for such insurance might find out that their insurance policies are not acknowledged by the medical institutions in Romania's partner countries in the European Union, unfortunately.

The issue of recreation and entertainment opportunities in ecumenical tourism should not be at stake in this case, except, maybe, for the groups of young people for whom many priests have organised, in many countries, discos in their own places of prayer!

A simple search of the Internet for ecumenical cultural tourism activities show that **this type of tourism is not promoted as it should be** – except, maybe, for the pilgrimage tourism type. Communication technology and information channels in the field identify, at least in Romania, with the initiatives of vicars that organise religious trips for their believers unfortunately without a substantial involvement of tourism specialists.

The economic effects of religious trips are obvious in the hotel industry, in the sphere of transports for people, and of the religious souvenir and handicraft industry, in the development of some

forms of trade. Ecumenical tourism brings benefits for the local communities; however, they also create agglomeration, environmental damage; hence, the need for proper management techniques of the tourism flows (people management and control).

4. Conclusions

Christian or faith tourism is a sub-category of religious tourism; however, because there are also other believers than Christians involved, we need to use the wider notion of ecumenical tourism in the development of tourism products. There are three main sub-types of pilgrimage or faith tourism: traditional pilgrimage, humanitarian missionary tourism and confessional travel.

The structure of hospitality is common to all the types of tourism; in pilgrimage tourism, however, there are special accommodation places and, in Islamic tourism, they need to observe halal requirements for accommodation, prayer, and food areas, and avoid haraam products and services.

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