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## Demographic Characteristics Influencing Religious Tourism Behaviour: Evidence form a Central-Eastern-European country

Anna Irimias

Kodolanyi Janos University of Applied Sciences, annairimias@hotmail.com

Ariel Mitev

Corvinus University of Budapest, ariel.mitev@uni-corvinus.hu

Gabor Michalko

Geographical Institute, Research Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, michalko@iif.hu

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## **Cover Page Footnote**

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# Demographic Characteristics Influencing Religious Tourism Behaviour: evidence from a Central-Eastern-European country

Anna Irimias, Ariel Mitev & Gabor Michalko

Anna Irimias, *Kodolanyi Janos University of Applied Sciences,*

Ariel Mitev, *Corvinus University of Budapest*

Gabor Michalko, *Geographical Institute, Research Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Corvinus University of Budapest*

[annairimias@hotmail.com](mailto:annairimias@hotmail.com), [ariel.mitev@uni-corvinus.hu](mailto:ariel.mitev@uni-corvinus.hu), [michalko.gabor@csfk.mta.hu](mailto:michalko.gabor@csfk.mta.hu)

Although religious tourism and pilgrimage have been widely studied there is very limited research that explores the peculiarities in attitude and behaviour among tourists with different demographic factors. The present exploratory study enhances the discussion on perception of religious tourism behaviour. Specifically, eleven statements on attitude and behaviour were explored among 345 Hungarians with different socio-demographic backgrounds. The results show that there are significant variations between senior and young travellers: seniors see as important, the educational purposes and feelings of national identity related to sacred sites while these are less motivating for the young. The frequency of participating in religious tourism is also a determining factor: frequent travellers donate more and are more willing to purchase 'sacred' souvenirs. The findings provide inputs for developing a new scale to measure attitude and related behaviour in religious tourism. Furthermore, practical implications of the research are relevant to managers of sacred sites because a better understanding of visitors' behaviour would enhance market segmentation and marketing to target groups.

**Key Words:** religious tourism, events, seniors, managerial implications, Hungary.

## Introduction

Pope Francis was named Person of the Year by the Times in 2013; his friendly manner, clear and simple message and evangelical values enhanced the Pope's popularity among religious and non-religious people. The Economist (19 Apr 2014) stated that Jorge Mario Bergoglio has re-branded the Catholic Church and many have turned towards its institutions with trust; his popularity has boosted the increasing phenomena of pilgrimages and religious events within the Catholic domain. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2014), annually, 300 to 330 million people travel to sacred sites worldwide. Shrines, venerated sites and religious places have become some of the most visited attractions for religious and cultural tourists (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). This is significant in an era where secularisation has been widespread in the Western world and church attendance continues to fall (Stausberg, 2009).

Religious tourism has been a growing phenomenon in Central-Eastern-European (CEE) countries. However, it must be noted that religious tourist behaviour in CEE countries - in Hungary in our case - shows some

peculiarities emerging from tourists' socio-demographic characteristics. In the 20th century, the relationship between the State and the Catholic Church in Hungary faced several conflicts (Kocsis, 2006). Two world wars, right and left wing dictatorships and the establishment of the Communist political and economic system had significant consequences for the Catholic Church (Romsics, 2005).

After the conclusion of the Second World War, Hungary was forced to enter the sphere of the Soviet Union. Religion was immediately banned and the Church became one of the main enemies of the ruling system. The Church had to endure several punishments such as confiscation of properties, schools, institutions and many (politically active) priests, friars and even the cardinal were persecuted (Romsics, 2005). In 1989, following the collapse of the Communist socio-political system in Hungary, the Church started to regain its power and socio-cultural influence. Changes in tourism policy led to the emergence of new trends and products in need of a managerial vision to revitalise tourism practices which were hidden and sometimes forgotten during Socialist rule (Panyik and Rátz, 2014). The 'rebirth' of Catholicism and the

rediscovery of cultural and religious heritage, have contributed to the popularity of religious events among different social groups within Hungarian society. For seniors who experienced the socialist system, visiting religious places also means to rediscover their cultural roots linked to Catholicism and deepen their reflection on national identity. In contrast, younger generations have a cultural-conscious attitude and behaviour at holy places and pilgrim events (Irimiás and Michalkó, 2013).

A very limited body of research is available on how demographic characteristics influence religious behaviour. Understanding different age groups' motives and behaviour on site would ease intergenerational communication and provide more memorable experiences for tourists in various phases of their life-cycle. The present research explores the perception of religious tourism behaviour in a retrospective way without focusing on one specific site or event. The aim of this empirical work is to investigate similarities and differences in attitude and behaviour between seniors and young tourists visiting venerated places and attending religious events. The following enquiries are addressed:

- Are there any differences in attitude and behaviour between those who consider themselves religious and those who visit sacred sites for tourism purposes?
- Are there any differences in attitude and behaviour in religious tourism between young and older travellers?
- Are there any relationships between the frequency of attending religious events or visiting sacred sites and perceived behaviour?

In the present paper, the term religious tourism is understood to mean journeys to holy places, sacred sites, cathedrals and any significant ecclesiastical building, while religious festivities, ceremonies and celebrations are considered as religious events. The term pilgrimage is also used to refer to religious motivated journeys undertaken by pious believers, to places of particular spiritual importance. It is accepted that attitude influences behaviour and in the present study we sought to capture and interpret tourists' perceptions of religious tourism behaviour.

The paper begins with a literature review, critically analysing the motivational domains in religious tourism (sacred sites as cultural attractions, political aspects of religious tourism, educational purposes for

visiting sacred sites) on which the empirical research is based. Following a description of the methodology, tourists' perceptions of religious tourism behaviour are investigated with eleven self-developed statements. Finally, the peculiarities of the different demographic groups are discussed. Demographic characteristics influencing religious tourism behaviour raise several questions in former Socialist countries where policy makers, site managers and service providers face challenges in coordinating the traditional needs of senior tourists with the aim of providing new products and services that attract younger generations. The research presents practical implications to site managers, service providers at religious events and tour operators.

### ***Motivational domains and socio-demographic characteristics in religious tourism***

Travelling to sacred sites has been a physical expression of faith and worship since ancient times. Religious tourism can have several motivations which can vary from the need for personal fulfilment, to a wish to participate at religious rituals, to offering prayers and vows. A wide literature on religious tourism and pilgrimage analyses the multifunctional nature of such journeys (Nyaupane, Timothy and Poudel, 2015; Raj and Morpeth, 2007; Rinschede, 1992 among others). As Nolan and Nolan (1992) observed, religious sites in a broad sense can be subdivided into pilgrimage shrines, religious tourist attractions and religious events. In fact, architecturally outstanding ecclesiastical buildings and historically relevant religious places attract not only worshippers but also tourists with different motivations, exhibiting different behaviours (Nolan and Nolan, 1992; Poria, Butler and Airey, 2003; Wiltshier and Clarke, 2012). Studies show that religious tourists' wishes for holiday and cultural pursuit are intermingled with motivations linked to political or educational purposes (Digance, 2003; Korstanje, Skoll and Timmermann, 2014; Timothy and Olsen, 2006).

In previous literature, significant attempts were made to understand religious tourism behaviour and how religiosity has influenced individuals' everyday practices, such as clothing, social interactions and nutrition (Poria, Butler and Airey, 2003). The pilgrimage - tourism continuum, elaborated by Smith (1992) was the first attempt to categorise religious and cultural tourists. Smith (1992) highlighted a dichotomy between pilgrims and tourists, placing the former on the sacral end, the latter on the secular end of a

continuum, suggesting that tourists and pilgrims differ in their motivation, consumption and experience at religious sites. Such dichotomy between pious believers and tourists visiting the same sacred site has been critically discussed, arguing that the differences between these two actors are narrowing and suggesting that pilgrimage travel often includes touristic consumption (Collins-Kreiner and Kliot, 2000; Nyaupane *et al.*, 2015; Olsen, 2013).

Religious tourists' behaviour is also influenced by moral obligations. So called 'must see' attractions (e.g. the Vatican City for Catholics) and events might drive religious tourists' travel preferences. Moral obligation along with nostalgic reasons and didactical purposes are strong motivations to educate family members about religious beliefs (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). According to Cohen (2006:80) the 'educational experience at a religious site depends on the perception of the traveller'. Visits to historically important sacred sites offer the possibility for exploring one's cultural and religious roots. The spiritual experience can also be fulfilling for those tourists whose main motivation was not related to worship. As Collins-Kreiner and Kliot (2000) highlight, Christian pilgrims felt that they deepened their religious knowledge after visiting the Holy Land. The meaning and atmosphere of sites linked to Jesus' life strengthened their faith.

At some religious sites, socio-demographic differences drive the demand for tourism products (Bond, Packer and Ballantyne, 2015). Historically, the cult of the Virgin Mary and saints involved seeking cures for illnesses, protection from diseases or evoking help to resolve infertility. For instance, the vast majority of visitors to Marian shrines all around Europe are female pilgrims seeking the Virgin's beneficial interaction in health-related issues such as fertility, where pilgrims make vows concerning their own life and health or that of their family members, particularly children (Gemzöe, 2005). In contrast, Mount Athos is an exclusively male sacred shrine (Andriotis, 2009), somewhat similar to Mecca, where, due to gendered travel limitations most of the pilgrims are male (Henderson, 2011).

Some attractions and pilgrim events are more frequented by young religious tourists (McIntosh and Zahra, 2013), while senior travellers, especially economically disadvantaged older people in CEE countries, prefer short organised trips to sacred shrines (Mitev, Irimiás and Michalkó, 2015). Oman and Thoresen (2002) in their theoretical study exploring the

interpretation of causal effects of religion on health, argued that religious involvement has positive health outcomes (e.g. lower depressive symptomatology, better health practices among others) especially in relation to seniors' health related well-being.

### ***Political aspects of religious tourism in Central and Eastern Europe***

The growth of religious tourism and pilgrimage in CEE countries can be explained in part by the search for national and cultural identity (Irimiás and Michalkó, 2013; Reader, 2007). After the fall of the Berlin wall, trends in conserving, rebuilding and valorising venerated places and old pilgrimage trails had strong social and political support in Lithuania (Liutikas, 2015) and in Poland (Duda, 2014). In the case of post-Communist CEE countries, the revitalisation of religion gained national connotations and church affiliation became an important factor of social identification (Jerolimov and Zrinscak, 2006). In Poland, for instance, national identity has been strongly formed and reinforced by the Catholic Church. The Church historically represented a shelter to preserve Polish identity under Communist rule in the second half of the 20th century. Pilgrimages to Kalwaria Zebrzowska and to Czestochowa, the most important sacred sites in Poland, were organized illegally during the decades of Soviet state control (Jackowski and Smith, 1992).

More widely, numerous sacred sites in Eastern Europe, correspond to sites that embrace the meaning of national heritage (Rinschede, 1992), and this overlapping meaning of sacred sites and national heritage has been discussed in past literature (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). During the Balkan wars, Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina became associated with Catholic piety, an aspiration for peace and representation of regional identity (Reader, 2007). Accordingly, Skrbiš (2007) provided insights on how Medjugorje became a primary destination and a symbolic home for Croatian Catholic migrants who had no home to go back to. These findings reveal that religious tourism is far from being simply associated with faith and worship. A better understanding of the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals visiting sacred sites and pilgrim events would, therefore, provide site managers and event organisers with useful information on how to foster intergenerational interactions among different groups.



## Methodology

The aim of this paper is to investigate differences in attitude and behaviour between religious and cultural tourists visiting sacred sites. The focus is on whether differences exist between age groups, and whether there is a relationship between frequency of attending religious events / sites and behaviour. The rationale of this study is to understand different age groups' motives and behaviour on site, to ease intergenerational communication and to provide memorable experiences for religious tourists in various phases in their life-cycle.

### Research instrument

The research instrument is a structured questionnaire. The pilot survey took place in June 2012 and the main data collection was undertaken between March and May 2013. Data collection was carried out in Budapest, Hungary. Questions on religious affiliation, belonging to a congregation and issues regarding one's belief are extremely personal. This is the reason why it was vital to establish a relationship based on confidence and trust between the interviewers and the respondents. It was decided to involve a number of students at Kodolanyi University of Applied Sciences in Budapest, who were asked to contact family members and friends who participated in religious travel or events in the last three years. The students were carefully selected and following an interview with one of the authors, twenty students were engaged for the research. The questionnaires were provided in Hungarian.

The questionnaire consists of three sections which measure the following variables: travel frequency; attitudes and related behaviour in religious tourism and; socio-demographic profile. In the first section, respondents were asked about the frequency of their travels in the last three years (2010-2012). It was decided to limit the period of inquiry to the last three years because it is believed that respondents are able to more accurately recall recent journeys.

In the second section, respondents were presented with statements that aimed to investigate their perception of religious tourism behaviour. The items used in this section elaborated on the literature review and previous field research (Irimias and Michalko, 2013). The items used were self-developed and measured according to a five-point Likert scale, ranking from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'. A total of eleven items were employed. The last section of the survey contained socio-demographic questions.

To date, as far as the authors are concerned, there is no established scale to specifically measure tourists' attitude and behaviour in religious tourism: in academic literature focusing on religious tourism and tourists' visitation patterns, several scales have been used and one of these was the Leisure Motivation Scale elaborated by Beard and Ragheb in 1983 (Choe *et al.* 2013). More recently, a *Travel Motivation Survey* and the *Big Five Questionnaire* were employed by Scaffidi Abbate and Di Nuovo (2013), although in their research in Medjugorje the authors omitted any reference to religion. The TOMAS framework for monitoring behavioural changes through national guest surveys (TOuristiques MAarktforshungssystem Schweiz) has been applied by Krešić, Mikulić and Miličević (2013) but this scale does not measure tourists' attitude in an holistic way either.

The eleven self-developed statements in the present paper give insights on the links between religious tourism and national identity, educational purposes of visiting a sacred site, health related issues, the importance of donation and purchase of souvenirs in addition to the role of sacred sites as cultural attractions. For future research the basis of an appropriate scale has been tested with eleven statements elaborated from the critical analysis of academic literature and previous field research. The future aim is to widen the dimensions, based on Bond, Packer and Ballantyne's (2015) study, and to elaborate an internationally valid scale to measure tourists' attitude and behaviour at religious events and in religious tourism.

### Sample

A snowball sampling procedure was employed. Snowball sampling is considered to be a particularly effective tool when trying to obtain information on delicate issues such as religiosity. The sampling was initiated via the researchers' and students' acquaintances at Kodolanyi University of Applied Sciences as described above. For the selection criteria, respondents involved in the research must have travelled to religious events and / or participated in religious tourism in the previous three years. The snowball sample included 345 respondents who were Hungarian and over 18 years of age. The aim was to obtain as balanced a sample as possible regarding age groups, since the analysis of attitude and behaviour were expected to be influenced by socio-demographic factors as outlined in the aims of the research.

The objective of the sampling strategy chosen was not to achieve a representative sample of religious pilgrims living in Hungary, but to include a diversity of tourists who visit sacred sites. The aim was not to limit the investigation to one specific site or religious event chosen by the researchers. However, this sampling method has its own limitations. Since the questionnaire's theme was about religious tourism, individuals involved in the sample were predominantly religious. This means that drawing comparison between religious and non-religious tourists is not possible.

### Data analysis

The findings presented are based on the description of associations as well as differences between groups, based on averages. In order to determine if differences exist, one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) procedures were conducted with a chosen level of significance at 0.05, to evaluate differences between age, religiosity and frequency of travel to religious sites. Levene's test was used to examine homogeneity of variances among response categories for each dependent variable. Further, *post hoc* analysis using the Bonferroni test when equal variance was assumed and the Games-Howell test when equal variance was not assumed, were utilized to clarify the nature of any significant differences. SPSS software was used to calculate mean scores for each element.

## Results

The sample was heterogeneous and the different age groups were equally represented. The sample consisted of 345 participants - of this, 58.8% was female and 39.7% male (Respondents' demographic characteristics are provided in Table 1). The respondents were relatively well educated with 45% holding a degree.

It was deemed relevant to investigate the religious background of respondents. The majority (78.6%) grew up in a religious family and considered themselves religious (Table 2). It is interesting to note that in a former Socialist country like Hungary religion was banned for decades and religiosity was practiced within the hidden, domestic environment until 1990. In the questionnaire the strength of religiosity was not investigated, neither was respondents thoughts about being religious (e.g. attending church services, praying etc.). Respondents' choice was simply based on their own understanding of the term, and there was no attempt to guide or influence them.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency (N=345)	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	137	39.7
Female	203	58.8
Missing data	5	1.4
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18-24	79	22.9
25-39	92	26.7
40-59	99	28.7
60<	72	20.9
Missing data	3	0.9
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	125	36.1
Married	117	33.9
In relationship	44	12.8
Divorced	27	7.8
Widow	28	8.1
Missing data	4	1.2
<b>Education</b>		
Primary	13	3.8
Secondary	31	9.0
Diploma	143	41.4
Graduate	155	44.9
Source: authors' research		

The results show that the majority of those who participate in religious tourism belong to a religious community (83.8%) and consider themselves to be religious (Table 2). This result gives an important contribution to the discussion on the nature of religious tourism. Since it is widely accepted that religious attractions and religious events attract numerous cultural tourists and people who are not concerned with the religious meaning of the place (Nolan and Nolan, 1992, Rinschede, 1992). As mentioned before, this research was not carried out at a specific sacred site and respondents were asked about their attitude and related behaviour in a retrospective way, recalling a significant experience. The main reason for adopting this method was that expected results shed light on

**Table 2. Respondents' Religious Background and Religiosity**

Demographic characteristics related to religion	Frequency (N=345)	Percentage
<b>Grown up in a religious family</b>		
Yes	271	78.6
No	58	16.8
No response	16	4.6
<b>Considers him/herself a believer</b>		
Yes	269	78.0
No	37	10.7
No response	39	11.3
<b>Belongs to a religious community</b>		
Congregation	289	83.8
No	13	3.8
Atheist	8	2.3
No response	35	10.1

Source: Authors' Research, 2013

aspects of religious tourism which otherwise would have remained hidden. Results clearly show that when either religious or non-religious people visit sacred sites they are concerned with the meaning of the place, its religious and historical importance.

Perceptions of religious tourism behaviour were considered in the next section of the survey. From critical analysis of the academic literature on religious tourism five key issues emerged. Field research and personal observations reinforced the validity of these major motivational domains concerning religious sites and events. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement (where 1 indicates 'I absolutely disagree' and 5 'I absolutely agree') with the statements. A one-way ANOVA indicated that there are significant differences between respondents based on their age. The differences are presented in Table 3, with the means of each group and the p-value of the F-test. In the last column, the groups with significant differences are shown. Since there were more groups the use of *post hoc* tests was needed.

The *post hoc* Bonferroni and Games-Howell tests identified differences between age groups. Differences in perceptions of religious tourism behaviour are evident particularly among the youngest (18-24, **group a**) and the oldest (>60 **group d**) age groups. Participants belonging to the >60 age group affirmed that visiting churches usually forms part of their journey while it is less important for younger

respondents (4.20 vs. 3.20). Senior travellers usually travel to destinations where they can visit religious attractions while this aspect is less important for the young (3.44 vs. 2.12). Considering that religious attractions and sacred sites have a strong historical meaning and their importance often is recognized as an outstanding universal value (e.g. the Holy City of the Vatican is a World Heritage Site), it is no surprise that older respondents see it as important that their family members and friends get acquainted with the significant places of Christianity ( $df=3$ ,  $F=6.78$ ,  $sig.=.00$ ). The wish to enrich family members' knowledge on the history of Christianity and its emblematic places raises interesting questions / challenges regarding interpretation at sacred sites.

Further, senior participants stated that visiting Hungarian sacred places and holy sites strengthens their national identity (3.75 vs. 2.49). Perhaps this reflects the fact that pilgrimage sites usually have different layers of meaning. The patron saint of a nation can be identified with a specific place (e.g. Şumuleu ciuc - Csíksomlyó in Romania for Hungarians). These places reinforce a sense of belonging not only in a religious way but also to a nation through involving people's personal heritage. Csíksomlyó is a sacred place for all Hungarians living within and outside of the country's border and is a symbolic meeting place for Hungarian families who were divided with the redrawing of national borders in the aftermath of the Great War (1914-1918).



**Table 3. Differences in Attitude and Behaviour Among Different Age Groups Showing Means**

<b>Demographic characteristics related to religion</b>	<b>18–24 (n=79) Group a</b>	<b>25–39 (n=92) Group b</b>	<b>40–59 (n=99) Group c</b>	<b>60 &lt; (n=72) Group d</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Identified differences between groups</b>
The visit of one or more churches usually makes part of our journey.	3.20	3.51	4.02	4.20	.000	ac, ad bc, bd
I consider churches primarily for their architectural and historical value.	3.31	2.93	3.07	2.97	.191	
I usually buy some souvenirs when attending religious events or visiting a sacred site.	2.49	2.73	2.92	3.28	.004	ad
When travelling I am interested to visit non-Christian sites as well.	3.28	3.47	3.75	3.67	.098	
I consider important that my family and friends know the significant historical places of Christianity.	2.90	3.33	3.54	3.79	.000	ac, ad
I usually travel to destinations where I can visit religious attractions.	2.12	2.86	2.89	3.44	.000	ab, ac, ad bd, cd
Through a donation, I support the church that I visited as a tourist.	2.92	3.17	3.69	3.90	.000	ac, ad bd
I prefer to visit churches when I travel abroad.	2.77	2.44	2.25	2.37	.090	
Visiting Hungarian sacred places reinforces my national identity.	2.49	2.87	3.31	3.75	.000	ac, ad bd
It happened that I visited a sacred place to improve my own or one of my relative's health conditions.	2.00	2.38	2.52	2.84	.004	ad
I like watching religious-themed films.	2.33	2.81	3.30	3.76	.000	ac, ad bd

Source: Authors' Research, 2013

Sacred sites are also considered to be healing places. Numerous holy places are associated with miraculous cures and forgiveness of sin. Senior respondents stated that they have visited holy places and have participated in pilgrimages to enhance their own health condition, or they made prayers for a family member to get cured ( $df=3$ ,  $F=4.60$ ,  $sig.=.004$ ). Although to improve health conditions and get cured are not among respondents' primary motivations, senior travellers consider healing to be much more important than young respondents (2.84 vs. 2.00).

Buying local souvenirs at sacred sites is a popular activity among Hungarian visitors (Clarke and Raffay, 2015). Evidence shows that supporting the church with a donation is more frequent among older travellers than among young people. Buying souvenirs is a typical activity at religious events where local festivities and religious ceremonies coincide. Seniors are also more open to cultural programmes in their leisure time, such as watching religious-themed feature films ( $df=3$ ,  $F=17.53$ ,  $sig.=.000$ ).

### ***Differences in perceptions of religious tourism behaviour by religious and non-religious respondents***

As evidenced in Table 4, differences among groups were identified and analysed. From the data provided (Table 4), it appears that significant differences were identified between religious and non-religious respondents who participated in religious tourism. Non-religious people usually visit churches and sacred sites for their architectural and artistic value and consider these as heritage sites. Non-religious respondents do not visit holy places to improve their health conditions (1.92 vs. 2.61), rarely donate to the church or buy souvenirs.

Educational motives for visiting significant sacred sites of Christianity were much more important for religious respondents than non-religious tourists (3.63 vs. 2.38). Similar results were found when faith tourists affirmed that visiting Hungarian sacred sites enhanced their feelings of national identity. Here, religious people agreed more with the statement compared to those who consider themselves to be secular tourists (3.28 vs.

**Table 4. Differences in Attitude and Behaviour Based on Respondents' Religiosity (showing means)**

	<b>Religious (n=267) Group a</b>	<b>Not religious (n=37) Group b</b>	<b>p-value</b>
The visit of one or more churches usually makes part of our journey.	3.85	3.30	<b>.010</b>
I consider churches primarily for their architectural and historical value.	2.87	4.05	<b>.000</b>
I usually buy some souvenirs when attending religious events or visiting a sacred site.	3.03	2.14	<b>.000</b>
When travelling I am interested to visit non-Christian sites as well.	3.51	3.54	.907
I consider important that my family and friends know the significant historical places of Christianity.	3.63	2.38	<b>.000</b>
I usually travel to destinations where I can visit religious attractions.	3.08	1.78	<b>.000</b>
Through a donation, I support the church that I visited as a tourist.	3.67	2.54	<b>.000</b>
I prefer to visit churches when I travel abroad.	2.38	2.71	.173
Visiting Hungarian sacred places reinforces my national identity.	3.28	2.26	<b>.000</b>
It happened that I visited a sacred place to improve my own or one of my relative's health conditions.	2.61	1.68	<b>.000</b>
I like watching religious-themed films.	3.27	2.08	<b>.000</b>
Source: Authors' own Research			

2.53). These results highlight that religiosity can have a significant influence on attitude and behaviour in religious tourism and, in general, in visitor patterns to sacred sites.

#### ***Relations between perception of religious tourism behaviour and frequency of travel***

Respondents were asked about their frequency of travel to religious events and sacred sites in the last three years (2010-2012). A one-way ANOVA and *post hoc* tests indicate that there are significant differences in the perception of religious tourism behaviour between those who travelled less than once a year and frequent travellers (more than three times a year). Those who travel once a year to a religious event or a sacred site (n=185) showed similar attitude and behaviour to those who participated in such events twice or three times a year (Table 5). The differences are presented in Table 5, with the means of each group and the p-value of the F-test. In the last column, the groups with significant differences are shown.

The major differences evidenced by the Bonferroni and Games-Howell post hoc tests emerge between **group a** and **group d**. Tourists who take part in religious

tourism once a year (n=185) appreciate the architectural and artistic value of ecclesiastical buildings while this is less important for those who visit sacred sites more than three times a year (3.22 vs. 2.38). The educational motive to visit the significant places of Christianity were much more relevant for those who travel more than three times a year than for other groups (4.11 vs. 2.00 and 3.20). The same group of frequent travellers (**group d**) perceive the importance of national sacred sites and feel that the visit to Hungarian sacred sites enhances their national identity. They more often offer a donation and purchase souvenirs.

The frequency of visiting sacred sites and participating in religious tourism significantly influences tourists' perception of religious tourism behaviour. Thus, these differences in religious tourism behaviour challenge sacred site managers and religious event organisers.

## **Discussion**

Religious tourism and pilgrimage in CEE countries is a growing phenomenon. Much academic attention has been paid to sacred site management and the reconstruction of historical sites that were banned or

**Table 5. Relationship Between Perception of Religious Behaviour and Frequency of Travels (showing means)**

	<b>Less than once a year (n=21) Group a</b>	<b>Once a year (n=185) Group b</b>	<b>Twice or three times a year (n=74) Group c</b>	<b>More than three times a year (n=65) Group d</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Identified differ- ences between groups</b>
The visit of one or more churches usually makes part of our journey.	2.52	3.67	3.70	4.31	.000	ab, ac, ad bd cd
I consider churches primarily for their architectural and historical value.	4.05	3.22	3.03	2.38	.000	ab, ac, ad bd cd
I usually buy some souvenirs when attending religious events or visiting a sacred site.	2.05	2.71	3.20	3.15	.001	ab, ac, ad bc
When travelling I am interested to visit non-Christian sites as well.	3.24	3.50	3.78	3.57	.298	
I consider important that my family and friends know the significant historical places of Christianity.	2.00	3.20	3.55	4.11	.000	ab, ac, ad bd cd
I usually travel to destinations where I can visit religious attractions.	1.60	2.56	3.19	3.55	.000	ab, ac, ad bc, bd
Through a donation, I support the church that I visited as a tourist.	2.20	3.31	3.69	3.82	.000	ab, ac, ad bd
I prefer to visit churches when I travel abroad.	2.47	2.55	2.64	1.98	.021	bd, cd
Visiting Hungarian sacred places reinforces my national identity.	1.84	2.83	3.57	3.62	.000	ab, ac, ad bc, bd
It happened that I visited a sacred place to improve my own or one of my relative's health conditions.	1.70	2.20	2.81	2.89	.000	ac, ad bc, bd
I like watching religious-themed films.	1.80	2.95	3.07	3.69	.000	ab, ac, ad bd cd

Source: Authors' own Research

destroyed during Socialist rule. As far as the authors know no other studies have analysed religious tourists' demographic characteristics and behaviour at religious sites. This study empirically demonstrates that individuals attending religious events and visiting venerated places are different in their attitude and behaviour. The study investigates a wide range of motivational domains such as educational purposes, health related issues, historical and identity building aspects, and in so doing, differences and similarities among age groups were revealed.

The research provides practical implications. First, stakeholders involved in religious site management should take into consideration the differences in behaviour between senior and younger religious tourists. Although religious services remain traditional,

added services or products could ease interaction between different age groups. For example, at pilgrimage sites, a place could be developed, where the historical importance of the site and its role in national identity construction could be explained in an interactive way. This would facilitate co-creation and would encourage younger visitors to improve their knowledge on issues that are relevant for senior visitors. A better understanding of the historical and cultural importance of a religious site would raise its appreciation among young people and this is key for site conservation in the long run.

Second, it is assumed that different target groups must be addressed through different marketing channels and segmentation is necessary. For this reason, rebuilt sacred sites and pilgrimage centres should consider

elaborating a better plan to attract young people interested in religious tourism. A communication strategy that evidences the spiritual and physical benefits of attending each sites would be desirable. Giving voice to the young would challenge the stereotyped image of religious events only attended by seniors or individuals who are ill. The increased presence of young people would be beneficial for seniors as well. Carefully managed and fostered interaction between different age groups would facilitate intergenerational communication and would widen the scope of visitors.

Third, sacred sites and pilgrimage centres need financial resources to maintain their activities and services. This does not mean that their products and services should be commercialised. However, with appropriate funding, a better and more transparent communication of the sites could be achieved, and a focus on towards different age groups could be useful to reposition the value of such sites.

Fourth, for the empirical research on demographic characteristics of religious tourists, the research team developed and tested a scale with 11 items. The findings in this project help to improve such a scale that might be useful in future research on the demographic characteristics of religious tourists, a topic that requires much attention in our aging society.

## Conclusions

This paper investigated a range of perceptions of religious tourism behaviour involving issues such as national identity, health, educational purposes, cultural attraction of sacred sites, the giving of donations and souvenir purchase and watching religious-themed films. As such, this study differs from others that focus on religious tourism for three reasons:

1. the study was not carried out in a single sacred site;
2. the study involved religious tourism experiences which differed in geographical scale and length;
3. the study focused on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, especially on age-related attitude and behaviour.

The results demonstrate that religious tourism is far from being homogeneous.

The examination of demographic characteristics, religiosity and frequency of religious journeys raises a number of issues for discussion relevant to sacred site

management and marketing of religious tourism. Significant differences in the perception of religious tourism behaviour emerge among senior and young travellers. Interest in visiting sacred sites and their educational purposes are much more important for senior travellers who (presumably) have a wider knowledge of the sites' history. Those who travel to sacred sites more than three times a year search for a deeper understanding of the site's meaning. This is evident when the educational purposes of the journey and the feelings of national identity are investigated.

Reinforcing national identity at sacred sites seems to be relevant in Central and Eastern European countries, and especially in Hungary where the research was employed. This result gives insight into personal heritage, national identity and the Church in its institutional function. Watching religious-themed films in one's leisure time not only entertains viewers but deepens their knowledge of history and links stories to a precise location. Further, the survey also highlighted a number of important contextual issues relating to the commercialisation of sacred sites (the purchase of 'sacred' souvenirs and donation), showing significantly different behaviour between young and old, and religious and non-religious respondents. The findings suggest that intergenerational communication should be encouraged between groups by site managers or event organisers.

This study also suggests new aspects to investigate in the religious tourism realm. The impact of watching religious-themed feature films on religious site perceptions were not specifically addressed by the researchers. Knowledge in this regard could help to develop a better communication strategy for the sites. Conclusively, in order to improve visitors' perception of religious sites and pilgrim events, communication strategies should consider differences and similarities between different age groups.

## Limitations of the Research

One shortcoming of the paper is that all respondents were Hungarian. Results may vary in an international context. In this exploratory study the statements were developed on the basis of the literature review and former field research. This might be a limitation (or a resource) because the items reflect the authors' research interests. Although the statements cannot be considered a scale, they represent the starting point for the development of an appropriate scale to internationally measure attitude and related behaviour in religious tourism. In future research we aim to



elaborate a new scale based on our findings and integrating Bond, Packer and Ballantyne's (2015) behaviour scale.

Another research limitation emerges from the sampling method. Due to its nature, the process of snowball sampling might lead to sample bias. It is highly possible that subjects involved in the research asked others with the same characteristics and level of religiosity. Research should be repeated with a wider and more representative sample, to compare results.

Finally, the interpretation of this study must be placed within the context of Hungary where religious tourism for seniors may be influenced by restricted financial resources and poor health conditions when it comes to travel.

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## Appendix A : Questionnaire Survey

### Religious Tourism Attitude and Behaviour of Hungarian Travellers

To fill in the questionnaire survey is voluntary and it takes around 15 minutes.

The results will be used only for scientific purposes.

- 1. In the last three years (2010-2012) how often did you participate at religious events or pilgrimages? (choose only one answer)**

1 Neither once    2 Once a year    3 Twice a year    4 Three times a year    5 More than three times a year

- 2. In the last three years (2010-2012) what were your most memorable religious event or pilgrimage experiences that you are able to recall?**

Name of the religious event / pilgrimage	Location	Year of your visit

- 3. Choose one of the religious events that you previously mentioned and answer the following questions, please.**

Name of the religious event / pilgrimage	Location	Year of your visit

- 3.1. What was your primary motivation to participate at the religious event / pilgrimage? (please explain as detailed as you can)**

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- 3.2. What kind of accommodation did you choose during your stay? (circle the number of one of the options please)**

1 accommodation offered by the religious community,	2 rooms offered by residents for free,	3 own property,
4 hosted by relatives or acquaintances,	5 hotel,	6 camping,
8 rural accommodation,	9 hostel,	10 other:
7 rented flat,		

- 3.3. How did you travel to religious event? (circle the number of one of the options please)**

1 by car,	2 by train,	3 by bus,
4 by a rented bus,	5 by the pilgrimage train,	6 by bicycle,
7 by airplane,	8 on foot,	9 other:

- 3.4. Whom did you travel with?**

1 I was a solitary traveller,	2 I travelled in a company of _____ people,	3 travelled with family,
4 travelled with friends,		5 travelled with colleagues/schoolmates,
6 travelled with acquaintances from our religious community,		7 other:

**3.5. Who organised the trip?**

1 travel agent,	2 myself,	3 the congregation,	4 our workplace / school,	5 other:
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**3.6. What other leisure activities did you participate in?**

1 none, only the religious event,	2 museums, exhibitions,	3 sightseeing,	4 trekking,	5 water sports,
6 spas,	7 visiting friends and relatives,	8 meeting or conference,	9 other:	

**4. How much do you agree with the following statements when you recall your recent religion motivated travel? (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree, n= do not know/ do not answer)**

The visit of one or more churches usually makes part of our journey.	1	2	3	4	5	n
I consider churches primarily for their architectural and historical value.	1	2	3	4	5	n
I usually buy some souvenirs when attending religious events or visiting a sacred site.	1	2	3	4	5	n
When travelling I am interested to visit non-Christian sites as well.	1	2	3	4	5	n
I consider important that my family and friends know the significant historical places of Christianity.	1	2	3	4	5	n
I usually travel to destinations where I can visit religious attractions.	1	2	3	4	5	n
Through a donation, I support the church that I visited as a tourist.	1	2	3	4	5	n
I prefer to visit churches when I travel abroad.	1	2	3	4	5	n
Visiting Hungarian sacred places reinforces my national identity.	1	2	3	4	5	n
It happened that I visited a sacred place to improve my own or one of my relative's health conditions.	1	2	3	4	5	n
I like watching religious-themed films.	1	2	3	4	5	n

**5. In this section please answer some socio-demographic questions.**

Your age:	1. 18-24	2. 25-39	3. 40-59	4. 60<
Your gender:	1. Male	2. Female		
Location of your residence:	_____			
Have you been grown up in a religious family?	1. Yes	2. No	3. do not answer	
What religious community do you feel to belong to?	1. _____	2. none	3. do not answer	
Do you consider yourself a believer?	1. Yes	2. No	3. do not answer	
Your family status:	1. Single	2. Married	3. In a relationship	
	4. Divorced	5. Widow		
Your highest educational degree:	1. Primary school	2. Secondary school		
	3. Diploma	4. Graduate		

Thank you for your contribution.

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