TOURISM FOR FAITH AT THE OLDEST PLACE OF WORSHIP FROM TIMIS COUNTY

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Abstract. *Tourism for faith or ecumenical tourism is the form of tourism through witch the faithful of any rite, traveling individually or in groups as pilgrims, missionaries or for silence and spend leisure time at objectives with religious vocation. Christian tourism can be considered a subcategory of ecumenical and religious tourism, for those reasons tourism for faith at Saraca Monastery Timis County may take the following forms: traditional pilgrimage, religious missionary trip or travel. For the development of tourism for faith it is necessary the promotion of local attractions such as Saraca Monastery by encouraging local tourism of short distance, rehabilitation of road infrastructure through objectives and their promotion by installing billboards and road signs toward religious settlements.*

Keywords: *tourism for faith, potential, promotion*

INTRODUCTION

The main criteria for choosing ecumenical targets underlying on their promotion refers to the level of authenticity, the uniqueness of the objectives, educational ties, thematic and logistical links, safety and comfort of pilgrims, the link between the consumption and conservation of ecumenical resource, the ability to maintain the resource at high level over time [1,4].

The potential of faith tourism in Timis County is based on:

- The revelations of some gods (St. George, Sangeorge Monastery, Timis County);
- temporary living places of some religious personalities (First patriarch of Romania, Miron Cristea, Romanesti Monastery, Timis County);
- spaces devoted to rituals (Metropolitan Cathedral, Timisoara)
- semi isolated religious settlements, monasteries, hermitages (Saraca Monastery, Semlacul Mic, Timis County).
- burial places of religious personalities, bishops and metropolitans (St. Joseph the New from Partos Monastery, Timis County).

Among the factors that determine the practicing of tourism for faith in Timis County, the most important are: the natural potential of some areas with mythological significance (sacred mountains, rivers with healer potential), cultural historic potential (religious buildings), religious traditions, (healing), attraction capacity and impact power on religious life, the material base required for pilgrimages [2,5].

Types of ecumenical tourism practicable in Timis County, result from the criteria for classification, these being:

- after religious convictions (Orthodox tourism, Catholic tourism, Neo-Protestant tourism);
- after the rhythm of the flow (sporadically tourism, weekly tourism, seasonal tourism);
- after the number of tourists (medium tourism, microturism);
- after spatial extent (local tourism, county tourism, regional tourism, national tourism, international tourism);
- after the time period (weekend tourism, summery tourism, winter tourism, permanent tourism);

- after the degree of organization (unorganized tourism, semi organized tourism, unorganized tourism) [6];
- by type of tourists (ecumenical or belief tourism, secular tourism).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

To conduct this work I have made studies at one of the places of practicing faith or ecumenical tourism, Saraca Monastery, Timis County, an architectural and ecumenical edifice, space preferred by Timis Orthodox population. The building dates from the thirteenth – fourteen century, being considered by Franciscan monks, in a certain period, as a monastery guard of orthodox, is a historical monument in Byzantine style, paintings dating from the sixteenth century. For promotion of faith tourism we propose for this monastery, measures to stimulate the activity of pilgrimage and highlight the uniqueness of the objective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The monastery is near Sumig formation of volcanic origin and the point of observation with Cula from Varset housed a Romanian school, and is found at 2 km from the village Semlacul Mic from Timis County.

The architecture of the monastery can be an attraction point for tourists who visit and it must be promoted. The columns of a porch cover the front entrance to the church, roof hiding the octagonal windows like cracks in the walls. The windows allow only a small beam of light to penetrate at the interior to highlight the wonderful masterfully painted panels. It can admire the proportions of the lines the harmony between the bottom body composed of narthex and two aisles, and semicircular altar which was recently modified, but also the conical spire. Viewed from outside the church presents a simple baroque profile of the cornice, not seen other decorative elements than at the portico at the entrance to the church.

Analyzing the plan of the monastery we noted that narthex has an area of 15,400 square meters, 40,000 square meters ship, the altar 4 meters in depth and diameter 4,5o meters total length of the church 15.00 meters plus porch added later. The church tower is at ground height of 12 meters and width of the aisles is 8.00 meters.

Under the portico it can admire the frescoes on witch are observed silhouettes of saints, some covered with a layer of mortar and lime. Through the front door is entering in the place reserved for women, and the next door to reach inside the original cross-shaped vessel can observe dome resting on four pillars. An apse form the altar, today separated from the wood iconostasis, and the other three aisles form the vessel itself. Painting from the aisles are as follows: the arch of the apse of the right is represented the Presentation in the Temple and on the left the Good's Baptize, separated by a frame composed from red-brown floral motives, dark jagged in straight lines, light blue closed. In the south apse, on the right is the rear is found the Entrance to Jerusalem and on the dome spring is observed Raising of Lazarus and Healing the paralytic. Most important wall is the west where is the Crucifixion of Christ in the sniper arc and on the vault arch on right the Transfiguration and on the left the Burial.

Today in the church besides frescoes can be still admired painted on wood or cloth icons like:

- Icon of the Virgin Mary who shall embrace Jesus Christ which has an open book in hand painted on canvas;
- Christ blessed, icon painted on wood, around the Savior are the 12 apostles of Christ having in the middle above the image of Christ the God image;
- Virgin Mary with Christ in her arms, seated in the left of the royal door painted on wood, which contains Byzantine element.

To promote through faith or ecumenical tourism of this objective we propose:

- marking panels and signposts of the objective from the national road to the monastery;
- improving infrastructure through the objective;
- promote the objective through media;
- development of leaflets and promotional materials with religious art;
- promotion together with other objectives and introducing in the tourist circuit along with other monasteries;
- organizing meetings for propaganda purposes and for the enhancement of Byzantine art;
- conducting researches to highlight the wonderful ornaments painted and constructive and the history of Romanian education in Banat;

CONCLUSIONS

By practicing this tourism form of faith at monastery objectives, will grow the role of cultural tourism, by broadening the horizon of knowledge of those who practice this form of tourism. Situated in broad plains, documentary attested from 1270, Saraca Monastery, Timis County can become through a closer promotion, a place of pilgrimage for Orthodox Christians and of silence, reflection of the willing of a knowledge of ecclesiastical art from these parts.

The monastery is the most important monument of art from Timis County and from the whole Banat, both by the age of building that is kept in a good state of preservation, and by painting frescos and icons on canvas or wood, that present us the highest synthesis of the religious art from this corner of the world.

By promoting the values of the monastery as individual products or combined with other products, the audience willing of knowledge will come into contact with distant beginnings of local Timis culture, knowledge of the forms of art constructed or painted.

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