ENGAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS SITES IN THE TOURIST OFFER OF NOVI SAD: POTENTIALS AND NECESSARY IMPROVEMENTS

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Abstract: Novi Sad, as a town which still does not have an image of developed tourism destination certainly has great potential in terms of religious and cultural tourism as a multicultural centre with numerous religious sites. The vivid history of the town, as well as ethnical, religious and national diversity strongly influenced the construction of many churches of different religious communities. In this paper the quantitative-qualitative method of assessment is used for the evaluation of nine representative spiritual sites which showed us that their current state is not at an enviable level. This paper indicates priority fields for improvements and engagement of these sites in the tourist offer which should be the guidelines for future development of religious and cultural tourism which have a good perspective to become one of the dominant forms of tourism in the city tourism product of this town.

Keywords: Religious tourism, churches, Novi Sad, quantitative-qualitative method, heritage assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious as well as cultural tourism based on sacred sites has become very popular in the past few decades. Rinschede G. (1992) estimates that there are 200 million pilgrims who take part in international, national, and supraregional pilgrimage journeys alone. In addition, there is the yet uncounted number of travelers who annually gather at the regional religious centers or at religious ceremonies and conferences and who are not often counted as pilgrims. This shows the significance of this type of tourism in overall traveling.

Novi Sad, as a town which still does not have an image of a developed tourism destination certainly has great potential in terms of religious and cultural tourism as a multicultural centre with numerous religious sites.

Vivid history of the town, which was caused by the existence of a significant military base and important trade roads, immensely influenced the settlement of many nations who ruled it. They have brought their specific culture, religion, customs and peculiar architecture, which interacted and continued to develop over time. As a result, this ethnical, religious and national diversity strongly influenced the construction of many churches of different religious communities. Some of them are especially remarkable due to their
monumentality, valuable collections of different sacred objects, sophisticated architecture and historical significance (Božić S., 2011). Even though these sacred sites are very alluring to tourists and represent a great base for tourism development and generation of significant tourist visits, their current state as well as tourism organization is not at an enviable level. Exploring the possibilities of restoration, reconstruction, protection and inclusion of religious sites in the tourist offer of the town was totally neglected in the past. Based on the above mentioned the principle aim of this paper is to show the great potential of Novi Sad in terms of religious tourism and to develop some useful suggestions for future innovations, improvements and better engagement of sacred sites in the tourist offer of Novi Sad, based on the results of the quantitative-qualitative method of assessment of 9 representative spiritual sites (Fig. 1), as well as their affirmation through sustainable forms of religious and cultural tourism.

![Map of Novi Sad showing locations of spiritual sites](image)

Fig. 1: The location of nine representative spiritual sites of Novi Sad

2. STUDY AREA

The alluvial territory of the river Danube, where it makes a bend before turning East, represents the place where Novi Sad has been raised. This place is reputed to be a fertile ground on which, throughout ages, many nations, civilizations, cultures and religions have flourished. Novi Sad is the second largest city in Serbia. It is the main carrier of political, educational, traffic and economic functions, and it is the centre of the administrative district
of Vojvodina. The city is located on the border of Bačka and Srem, on the northern slopes of the Fruška Gora Mountain and on the plains of Southern Bačka (Arsenjev A., 2010).

The most remarkable characteristic of this town certainly is the idiosyncratic cultural and historical heritage, which is the main reason why it has become the cultural centre of the region. The name “Serbian Athens” completely justifies the above mentioned statement. The vivid and colourful history of the town, together with various nationalities, had an immense influence and impact on the architecture and construction of sacred places for many different religious communities. Some of them are especially remarkable due their monumentality, valuable collections of different sacred objects, sophisticated architecture and historical significance. In order to achieve the previously stated aim, nine representative sacred sites of Novi Sad were chosen, which are further described in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the study area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the church</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saborna Church – Saint George’s cathedral</td>
<td>Saint George’s cathedral is the central Orthodox church in Novi Sad and it is dedicated to Saint George. It has a full right to be called a “cathedral” because it represents the head church of the Serbian Orthodox eparchy of Bačka (Popov D., Stanojev B., 2004.) This church is under state protection as a valuable cultural monument (Ilić T., 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolajevska Church</td>
<td>The church of Saint Nicolas is reputed to be the oldest church in Novi Sad, and it is believed that its construction took place in 1830. It is an orthodox church and it is dedicated to transfer of the relics of St. Nicolas to Bari (Penić M., 2002). It is specific because above the central nave, a small onion dome rises. This is an unusual feature for religious buildings in the Pannonian region, but on the contrary, very characteristic for Russian churches (Dobrić et al., 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uspenska Church</td>
<td>Uspenska church is Serbian Orthodox church, dedicated to the assumption of the Mother of God. It was built between 1765 and 1777 in place of an older structure, dating from the early 18-th century. When it was finished, it was reputed to be the most beautiful church in the town. It was built in baroque style and the church is under state protection as an extremely important cultural monument (Petrović D., 2008).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Almaška Church</td>
<td>Almaška church is the largest Orthodox parochial church in Novi Sad, dedicated to The Three Holy Hierarchies. The church kept it’s original appearance in the late neoclassical style and looks monumental. Today it is famous for Teodorovic’s paintings (Tišma M., 1994).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church Name of Mary</td>
<td>The Name of Mary church is a Roman Catholic Church named after Virgin Mary. It is located in the centre of the town, on the north-eastern side of Liberty square. The colossal size of the building, as well as the beauty of its neo-gothic architecture, is leaving a strong impression on the citizens of the town (Penić M., 2002).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Synagogue</td>
<td>Synagogue, the Jewish Church in Novi Sad, is a part of an eclectic complex which consists of the Synagogue, which is turned into a concert hall, a former Jewish school and the building of the Jewish community centre. The present synagogue, the fifth one, was built between 1906 and 1909, according to a plan of Lipota Baumhorn, an architect from Budapest. It is considered to be one of the most beautiful monuments of its kind in Middle Europe (Tomić P., 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformation-Calvinist Church</td>
<td>The present church was built in the former hay market bought by Calvinists. The church is built in neo-gothic style, designed by renowned architect Győrgy Molnár.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
This religious building is particularly interesting because of the absence of conspicuous religious symbols. The Star of Bethlehem in the bell tower is the only symbol of this church and it is common for this religious community in Hungary (Arsenjev A., 2010).

**Slovak-Evangelical Church**

The church was designed by architect George Bema, and was completed and consecrated in 1886. The church was built by the Slovakian Evangelical religious community of Novi Sad. It is a small church with 150 seats and can accommodate up to 300 worshippers (Dobrić et al., 2009).

**Greek-Catholic Church**

The Greek-Catholic in Novi Sad, whose believers are Ruthenians, is dedicated to Christ's apostles Peter and Paul. The Greek Orthodox Church of St. Peter and Paul was built in the classical baroque style in 1822.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The essence of tourism evaluation is to assess the current state of resources because the assessment of their value enables us to set objective and realistic possibilities for tourism development (Čomić D., Pjevač N., 1997).

The word evaluation means determination of the value, estimation. Ahmetović-Tomka described tourist valorization as determining or assessing the value of the tourist attraction, and evaluation of the tourist attractiveness of those phenomena, objects and spaces which are, beside other characteristics, attractive for tourists and which help them meet their tourist (cultural and recreational) need. Two basic and most important categories of tourist valorization are the attractiveness and value (Ahmetović-Tomka D., 1994).

Under tourist valorization Čomić D., and Pjevač N., (1997) consider evaluation, and qualitative and quantitative assessment of the tourism value of all previously listed resources, as well as the other constituent elements of the tourist potential (tourist infrastructure). The aim of the evaluation is to assess the value of the elements of the tourist potential (individually and collectively) and to determine their utility and exchange value (Čomić D., Pjevač N., 1997).

All objects, phenomena or spaces formed by natural processes or human activity which possess a certain attraction for visitors can be a subject of tourist valorization. One of the most often used methods of tourist valorization is a quantitative–qualitative method, which allows a fair amount of freedom in the evaluation, and it is based on six indicators (Božić S., Berić D., 2013).

In this paper the quantitative - qualitative method of assessment is used for the evaluation of nine sacred sites of Novi Sad and following elements of evaluation are being taken into account: micro-location and accessibility, artistic value, ambience, tourist attractiveness, tourist infrastructure and fitting in with the other tourist assets in the vicinity. Cultural properties are assigned ratings from 1 to 5:

1 - Insufficient quality, without potential for tourism presentation
2 - A sufficient quality, local tourist significance
3 - Good quality of resources, regional significance
4 - Very good quality, a wider regional or national interest
5 - Excellent quality of resources, international tourist significance
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this paper, the technique of the interview was used in order to evaluate the sacred sites according to different indicators based on respondents’ answers.

In order to avoid subjectivity in the evaluation, the research was conducted in the following manner. One tourism expert from the Tourist Information Centre of Novi Sad and a University professor specialized in religious and cultural tourism were interviewed and they evaluated each indicator and gave their score to each of them. Moreover, the survey was conducted among 90 tourists who visited these objects using random sampling method, the indirect method of survey. Precisely, each visitor was asked to fill in a survey and assess each indicator for each sacred site. Eventually, the final score was obtained as the average of three estimates made by an expert from the Tourist Information Centre of Novi Sad, a University professor, and visitors and it is shown in Table 2.

Micro-location and Accessibility. Micro-location and accessibility of analyzed churches, for wide array of reasons can be considered very favorable. On one hand, advantageous position lays in the fact that Novi Sad has an excellent geographical and touristic position. And on the other hand, the majority of those churches are located in the old city centre, which is reputed to be the most alluring and the most visited part of the town by foreign tourists. The church Name of Mary is placed on the north-eastern side of Liberty square, which is the central city square. The advantage of this position lays in the fact that it often represents the starting point for tourist sightseeing. The cathedral is accessible from several directions. Zmaj Jovina Street has special importance as it is a pedestrian zone and one of the most dynamic and the most visited streets by tourists. Njegoseva Street leads from the church and connects it with Trifkovic square, where a spacious parking is located. On the opposite side, going from the cathedral through Modena Street, tourists can arrive at the taxi station, which immensely improves accessibility. Uspenska church is located in Uspenska Street and its attractive position is reflected through the fact that it’s near the Serbian National Theatre. The church is accessible from Mihajlo Pupin Street and a few meters from the church there is a parking of large capacity. Moreover, the bus stations are located in front of the church, which improves accessibility a lot, in terms of making it much easier for tourists to come and visit it. The synagogue is located in Jewish Street, widely open to traffic. To the west, it is connected with the avenue of Liberation, while to the south it goes to the city centre. The main disadvantage of the position is that the closest parking for buses is located 500 m from it, which limits mass tourist visits. Saborna church is accessible from the city centre, more precisely from Zmaj Jovina Street, which makes its position very favorable. Nikolajevska church is located in the Nikolajevska courtyard, also very easily accessible from the city centre. Nearby, there is a small convenient parking. In comparison with other churches in the city centre, Almaska church doesn’t have such an advantageous position. It is located in Almaska area, in the suburb of Novi Sad called Podbara. Regardless of this fact, its connection with the city centre, via regular taxi and bus lines is at an enviable level. When it comes to the micro-location of the Greek-Catholic Church in Novi Sad, it can be said that it is quite advantageous, considering its proximity to the city center. It is located on the corner of Jovan Subotic Street, which is a very busy street and it continues to Blvd. Mihajlo Pupin, and Svetozar Markovic Street. Directly across the street from this church, there is the Slovak-Evangelical Church, at the corner of Masarikova Street and Jovan Subotic Street. The accessibility of these churches is much
enhanced by the existence of parking, located about 200m from them, very close to the Uspenska Church, as well as Trifković square. The Reformation-Calvinist church is located on the corner of the Šafarikova and Paul Pope Streets, which continues to the boulevard of Liberty, while through Šafarikova Street it is connected with the Jewish street where the synagogue is located. Accessibility is enviable due to the immediate proximity of the main bus station and several city lines.

**The Artistic value.** The artistic value of churches of Novi Sad reflects in its magnificent architectural construction, diverse artistic styles (from baroque, secession to neo-gothic), outstanding interior decoration and valuable art works of famous Serbian painters. Moreover, the great value lays in longevity, if we consider that the oldest of these churches Nikolajevska, dates from 1730s. The spiritual value is of paramount importance especially for strong believers who consider those churches to be “guardians of the faith”. The Artistic value of those Orthodox churches is primarily reflected in a very valuable iconostasis, oil paintings and historical compositions. All of them are part of the magnificent work of most renowned Serbian artists, such as Paja Jovanovic, Uros Predic, Arsa Teodorovic. Besides this, it is important to emphasize the amazing achievements of baroque architecture as well as classicism (Almaska church) and the rich cultural treasure they keep inside. The synagogue has been valued by experts for protection of cultural monuments, as a building of high quality, monumentality and rarity (as the only synagogue in town). The great value lies in the secession style architecture, but on the other hand the most important artistic value-stained glasses have not been preserved in original form. They were restored and replaced in 1980s, and their appearance was significantly changed (Hozak A., 2008). The exceptional value of the church Name of Mary reflects in the elegant neo-gothic architecture with peculiar high tower, which aspires to heaven. Moreover, the artistic value of the church reflected in unusually big stained glasses, decorative rose window and high-quality sculpted statues of the saints, iconostasis and outstanding organs make this church one of the most visited in town. Reformation-Calvinist church has a significant value, which is reflected in its neo-gothic architecture, and high tower, which aspires to heaven, and the symbol of Bethlehem star. In terms of artistic value the interiors of the church are not on a high level due to the absence of the icons of the saints, as well as the organ. On the contrary, the artistic value of the Greek-Catholic Church reflects in the beautiful icons in Byzantine style, expressed as a mosaic of valuable Murmansk glass. Moreover, this church has magnificent architecture in Classicist-Baroque style, and the icons made by Arse Teodorovića and Ivana Ivanic, much appreciated artists of this period. The Slovak-Evangelical Church stands out with its baroque tower and architectural style with characteristics of the transition period between Baroque and Classicism.

**Ambience.** Quality of Ambience in which analyzed churches are placed, varies from church to church, but the urban component prevails. Generally, it consists of numerous cultural assets which surround those sacred objects and they have significant role in terms of improving attractiveness of those churches. Unfortunately, the natural components of the space, such as greenery and flowers, are insufficient and very rare. This can be a disadvantage, if we consider its important role in making church visits pleasant and convenient. The church Name of Mary is placed in a surrounding which consists of numerous buildings on Liberty square. In recent years, a lot of effort has been put into their restoration, and at present moment they make a harmonious whole with the cathedral. The whole area around the church is paved, and there are many wooden benches and flower
pots. Next to the cathedral, in the Catholic churchyard, there is a beautiful fountain which makes the atmosphere much more pleasant, and provides refreshment in the warm spring and summer months. The cathedral has also obtained an adequate lighting which makes it very noticeable at night. Uspenska church is located in not so pleasant surroundings for tourist visits due to its position near Boulevard, parking and numerous bus stations. They are the major causes of noise, which can be very irritating. The church doesn’t have a churchyard and there is no specially made fenced area and wooden benches. This may be the major factor which hinders tourist visits. Saborna church is placed in a small, but well arranged and fenced yard with lot of baskets and wooden benches which main purpose is to provide a short rest after their visit. The wider surrounding consists of valuable heritage of which we should especially mention the Bishop’s palace. The synagogue is located in very similar surroundings, but with less greenery and flowers. The Nikolajevska church has the most pleasant ambience because of the small park arranged around the church. In the park, natural components are more present then urban which make this place more convenient for visits. The park’s essential role reflects in the fact that it emphasizes the sense of peace, in the way that it is a significant isolation for noise, which is inevitable in urban areas such as Novi Sad. The environment in which the Slovak-Evangelical Church and the Greek-Catholic Church are placed is urban in character, as they are surrounded by old and modern buildings. Natural components are present but at limited space, which should change in the future by plantation of a variety of plants that will bring the atmosphere of peace and serenity to these churches. The place where they are located is extremely busy and noise is a significant problem. Reformation-Calvinist church defers from the other churches because, although it is in the city center, it is located in a quite peaceful and hidden place, with less traffic, which makes its ambience much more attractive.

Tourist attractiveness. In spite of the fact that each of the analyzed churches has potential to entice tourists and to be engaged in the tourist offer, up to now, this potential hasn’t been adequately used. The abovementioned Orthodox churches (Saborna, Nikolajevska, Almaska, Uspenska) still represent places visited mostly by Orthodox believers of Novi Sad, despite its outstanding cultural values and historical significance. Seldom are they visited by tourists, who visit them mainly as a “way station” while visiting other tourist sites, or in the form of organized student’s excursions. The Roman Catholic Church Name of Mary with its elegance and sophisticated neo-gothic architecture captivates all visitors including citizens. The strongest proof of this claim is that it is called the cathedral, as an expression of admiration, although it isn’t the seat of a bishop. The above mentioned has a great influence on its tourism potential and attractiveness, which is only partially used. Its location on the main square of Liberty creates an opportunity for more tourist visits than in the abovementioned Orthodox churches. However, the number of visits isn’t at enviable level yet. The concerts of sacred music could be one of the initiative factors of tourist visits. They have been held in the cathedral for the past few years, but in spite of this, people are not sufficiently informed about them. Adequately established advertising material doesn’t exist, and this certainly requires more attention on in the future, if our final aim is to make people come in draws to see churches. Considering the fact that the synagogue is unique and the only Jewish church in town, which makes it very distinctive, it’s potential and tourist attractiveness haven’t been adequately used. As numerous tourists visit the synagogue only during concerts it points out the cultural role and not the religious one. Visits in form of excursions exist, but are quite rare. The negative thing is that
buildings within the complex of the synagogue are closed for tourist visits. This fact significantly reduces the possibility of including this building in major tourist flows. When it comes to the attractiveness of the churches such as Slovak-Evangelical, Greek-Catholic, and Reformation-Calvinist, which are places of worship of religious communities not so present in Novi Sad, their engagement in the tourist offer is unsatisfactory, although the potential is certainly there. These potentials are reflected in the fact that these churches certainly contribute to the multiculturalism of Novi Sad, which is the subject of great interest especially among foreign tourists.

**Tourist infrastructure.** It appears as a very important factor which can considerably support the tourist affirmation of the churches. Recently, it has received adequate attention in form of required improvements. This reflects in the fact that roads, especially in the centre of the town, are becoming modern and of better quality. Moreover, parking spaces are built in every important place in the town. This certainly improves the accessibility of these sacred objects. Furthermore, the restorations of many old buildings have been made in order to improve the overall ambience of the old city centre. As a result, they regained their old glory and became more attractive for tourists. When considering this issue, significant work has been done on Liberty square, where the church Name of Mary is located. In its surroundings many building have been renovated, including The City Hall, building of the bank of Vojvodina etc. When the adequate lighting is concerned, the major results have been achieved in case of The Name of Mary church and The Synagogue. The other churches still have just basic lightning which makes them almost invisible at night. Not satisfying conditions of tourist infrastructure are within the church’s complex in almost all religious sites. The problem is that adequate objects are not built appropriately, so there is much room for improvement in this field. In those churches which have spacious, fenced yards (such as Nikolajevska, Saborna etc) souvenir shops should be constructed in accordance with a religious theme. The souvenirs should be sold at symbolic prices, and souvenir shops shouldn’t stand out of the entire ambience. The shops, located in the churches, could be moved outside the buildings, because it is not appropriate for one religious and spiritual place to have them inside the temple. Furthermore, one of the major disadvantages is that there are no adequate information boards in front of the objects, which would point out the cultural and historical significance of the buildings. The Synagogue has an information board, but all information refers only to concerts and events, without crucial information about the object. In addition, for the purpose of providing tourists with detail information about sacred sites, it is suggested to open an information stand in form of a separate object. Where there is enough space, a nice idea would be to build fountains for refreshment for both tourists and believers. They should also be constructed in a way that makes them harmonious with the environment. When it comes to tourist infrastructure of the Reformation-Calvinist church, there is much room for improvements. The façade of the church is quite dilapidated and requires extensive reconstruction in order to become more attractive for tourists. Also, the clock tower of the church is no longer working with the hands which are no longer in place. This leaves a very bad impression, and shows how little attention is paid for its tourist activation. The church is invisible at night, because the appropriate lighting still doesn’t exist. Thus, as soon as possible, the necessary steps should be taken in order to improve these elements. On the other hand, the Slovak-Evangelical and Greek-Catholic Church got new facades which returned them their former glory.
Fitting in with the other tourist assets in the vicinity. The level of integration in the tourist offer of analyzed churches of Novi Sad is satisfactory. They are located mainly in the old city centre with the major concentration of tourist assets. The significance of those churches and other cultural and historical sites lays in the fact that they are important complementary motives of tourist visits. The church Name of Mary makes a harmonious whole with other buildings in The Liberty square such as The City Hall, Hotel “Vojvodina” and the bank of Vojvodina. The Orthodox churches are located in a narrow territory, creating a unique whole with the other cultural resources. The synagogue is still not adequately integrated into the tourist and cultural wealth of the city. Nevertheless, its great potential can be achieved in terms of its joint presentation with the Jewish cemetery and a chapel. Even thought churches such as the Greek-Catholic, Reformation-Calvinist, and the Slovak-Evangelical haven’t been well engaged in the tourist offer so far, there are plenty of ways to make them fit in better with the other tourist assets in the vicinity. One of those ways is their connection with other churches in a single route, through which tourists, in one breath, could visit most of the sacred sites of different religious communities that exist on the territory of Novi Sad.

Table 2. Quantitative-qualitative method of tourist assessment of churches of Novi Sad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the sacred site</th>
<th>Micro-location and accessibility</th>
<th>Artistic value</th>
<th>Nearby environment</th>
<th>Tourist attractiveness</th>
<th>Tourist infrastructure</th>
<th>Fitting in with the other tourist assets in the vicinity</th>
<th>The overall rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saborna Church</td>
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</table>
The Overall Rating. The Overall Rating of the tourist value of the nine representative sacred sites is derived in Table 2, and it shows that it is medium for all churches together. It is very important to point out the fact that these figures refer only to the current situation. The main goal is to make improvements in the future in order to create better opportunities for tourist activation of these churches. The Name of Mary Church has the highest average mark (3.8) which indicates the regional significance of this object as well as the great potential for further tourist activation. After this church, the highest ranked church is Saborna church (3.7), as an important part of cultural heritage and a monument of regional significance. By implementing an intensive promotion there are odds to achieve their much better engagement in the tourist offer. Nikolajevska (3.2), Uspenska (3.1), Greek-Catholic (3), and Slovak-Evangelical (2.95) churches have a quite similar overall

<table>
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<tr>
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assessment of the current situation. However, which of them will be more tourist attractive in the future, depends on their further maintenance, protection and promotion. The Reformation-Calvinist (2.3), Almaska church (2.6) and the Synagogue (2.7) have the lowest average grades as sites of local significance. This doesn’t mean they don’t have great potential and value, but points out that so far there not enough attention was paid to their opening to tourists and activation in these purposes. We should bear in mind that some of these elements, such as the cultural and historical significance, as well as the artistic value, are out of our influence, or we can influence them in a very small extent. On the other hand, elements such as the ambience or construction of the space heavily depend on men’s efforts and investments. Thus, the improvement of these elements should be more in focus in the future.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS SITES IN NOVI SAD

A very important thing which should be beared in mind when planning the development of religious tourism is the difference between two types of religious tourist:

First group of tourists are believers who have strong religious views and attitudes and who regularly fulfill their religious rituals. While choosing a tourist destination, it is important for them to have access to religious sites (ability to attend all church services regularly).

The second group of religious tourists have the travel motivation similar to the classical tourists. In comparison with the first type of tourists, they are reserved about religious principles and less familiar with theological dogma. They don’t visit sacred places only for religious reasons, but out of curiosity (Stamenkovic I., 2006).

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned differentiation of tourists in religious tourism, it can be concluded that the time of their visit of religious sites should be different. More precisely, it is necessary to clearly define the time when the second type of religious tourists can visit these holy places, considering the time of the religious service, so as not to disturb the peace of believers. Otherwise, the basic religious values could be violated, which is against the aims of sustainable tourism development. This should be particularly taken into account when planning the itinerary for tourists in religious tourism. Furthermore, the time of visits should be determined, clearly stated and available to tourists, travel agencies and other companies which organize these tours. Noticing importance of the previously stated, some countries implemented good practices in order to tackle this problem. Some of them are scheduling important pilgrimage events during a time of year when relatively few tourists visit. Thus, at Bavaria’s beautiful Ettal Abbey, the main pilgrimage is held in November after the summer rush and before the ski season. Another solution is to have special areas set aside for the devout, as it has been done at the Church of All Nations in Jerusalem’s Garden of Gethsemane. Some churches post signs indicating that only worshipers may enter during times of religious services. Other signs may request that visitors be appropriately dressed if they enter the sanctuary, although the rules for “appropriate” dress code have been greatly modified over the past three decades (Nolan M., L., and Nolan S., 1992).

Of paramount importance for tourists who visit sacred places is to be accompanied with a person who will present them with all nessecary details related to religious themes
and stories, legends, or other items of their interest, such as architecture, art and the history of the church.

When it comes to religious tourism in Novi Sad, the situation is not satisfactory. Specifically, it could happen that tourists come to the church with the intention to visit it, but the church is closed or there is nobody to give them information about the church. Unfortunately, today these situations are reality and in order to develop religious and cultural tourism based on these sacred sites the changes are necessary in the long run. In order to achieve this goal in the future, it is necessary to fix the time for visits to the sacred sites and make this information public, in order to avoid the above mentioned unpleasant situations.

Those churches which have spacious fenced yards (such as Nikolajevska Church, the Cathedral, the Synagogue, the Greek-Catholic and Slovak-Evangelical Church) should relocate their souvenir shops there, instead of usual practice of placing souvenir shops inside the church, which is not appropriate for the interior of such religious and spiritual structures. These souvenir shops should be designed in accordance with religious themes which would fit in the ambience. The souvenirs should be sold at symbolic prices, in order to avoid commercialization of religious motives, which is of utmost importance.

As it was already mentioned it is of crucial importance to set up informational boards in front of the sacred sites, which for now, unfortunately, do not exist, but which are very important in providing tourists with the essential information about these places. More attention should be paid to the enhancement of the ambiance, in order to make a pleasant atmosphere for visitors. This especially refers to the construction of wooden benches, baskets, fountains etc. out of the material that would be fully compliant with the object. Some of the analyzed churches, with special emphasis on Nikolajevska Church, have a problem with the noise, which disturbs the peace of the visitors. This church is located next to the Secondary school of Economics, where a large number of children passes every day, and around which are areas covered with garbage, which is unacceptable if the goal is to engage this church in the tourist offer.

An important factor of tourism development and creating a positive image in the tourism field is certainly promotion. The artistic value, historical significance, and cultural heritage of religious buildings has no significant role in tourism, unless they are presented in a good way and tourists are aware of their existence. An interesting presentation of sacred sites should encourage even non-religious tourists to visit them and learn more about their cultural value. The best way to achieve this is the use of a wide array of advertising materials such as brochures, leaflets, guides etc. Moreover, the enviable results could be achieved by reports on television, various shows or by the organization of educational seminars.

Unfortunately, it is evident that people are not very well informed about these sacred places. For instance, not many citizens of the town are familiar with the fact that during the last few years, the church Name of Mary is the place where concerts of spiritual music are regularly held. Even less informed are tourists, who might be enticed to attend them. In order to make improvements in this field, the concert dates should be fixed and published in form of a calendar in the cultural guide of Novi Sad.

Moreover, the promotion of the synagogue is focused on presentation of the concerts and events which are held there, totally neglecting cultural values and religious significance of this spiritual site. In addition the buildings in the synagogue complex are closed for
tourists. Thus, their opening and preparing for tourist visits is the first step in terms of its
tourist activation. Nowadays, the synagogue’s main purpose is to be a concert hall for the
concerts of jazz, ethno and classical music. The main parts of the prayer were destroyed for
this purpose, which is totally unjustifiable and a negative example. Since 1992, the
organizer of music life in synagogue is the Music youth, and during the year there are
approximately 90 concerts held. Most of them are organized during events such as Bemus,
Nomus, Novi Sad spring musical, and one of the most visited are those held during
Christmas and New Years cycle (Hozak A., 2008).

According to the staff of the Tourist Information Centre of Novi Sad, foreign tourists
are especially fascinated with the multiculturalism of the city, and they are very interested in
visiting various religious sites. For tourists who are not Orthodox, Orthodox churches are
particularly intriguing, and they are eager to learn more about them, as something new,
interesting and different from their religion.

Significant visits to those religious sites are only during religious holidays and are
still at an unsatisfactory level. The poor attendance is caused mainly by the fact that travel
arrangements of travel agencies rarely include religious building into the offer. These
arrangements are made only at the request of tourists, and mostly include visits to churches
such as The Name of Mary and Saborna church as important cultural symbols of the town.
The other churches are visited mainly through panoramic sightseeing, usually without
entering and visiting the churches’ interior. This has negative consequences on tourism
development. In order to improve the situation it would be desirable to organize a travel
agency specialized in cultural and religious tourism. Its main task would be making
arrangements which would connect different religious sites in unique routes, and informing
tourists about benefits of sightseeing of that kind. For instance, the Synagogue together with
the Jewish cemetery and chapel could be interesting to tourists, if it’s followed with the
story of Jewish people, their history, customs, culture etc. On the other hand, Orthodox
churches should be linked in form of unique cultural and religious routes, followed with a
story of their importance for people of this region, their dynamic history and cultural wealth.
Religious buildings of old city centre should also be included in a unique arrangement and
appropriately interpreted to tourists. To achieve this a high-professional guide is certainly
necessary. Apart from the historical facts, he should enrich his story with some curiosities
and adapt it to the age and cultural level of the tourists.

6. SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

Certainly one of the good ways to enhance religious tourism and include religious
sites in the tourist offer of Novi Sad, represents the organization of various religious and
cultural tours. Due to the fact that visits to the multitude of churches in Novi Sad can be
combined with a large number of monasteries in the nearby Fruska Gora Mountain, it would
be hard to visit and experience all of them in one day, so it is suggested to organize a few
different religious and cultural routes lasting several days.

For instance, the first day of the tour would include the visit of representative
monasteries of Fruska Gora, known as Serbian "Holy Mountain” which is the cradle of
Orthodox Christianity. The itinerary would include monasteries Kuršėdol, Big Remeta,
Hopovo, and Jazak Monastery.
With the intention to continue the story of Orthodoxy, the second day tourists would visit the most important Orthodox churches of the town, starting with Almaška Church leading to the Saborna, Nikolajevska and ending with the Uspenska Church.

The third day of the tour, the tourists would visit other sacred sites of the city’s core, such as the Synagogue, Reformation-Calvinist, Slovak-Evangelical and the Greek-Catholic Church. In this way, tourists would not be overloaded with too much information in one day, and they could make an adequate picture of the multiculturalism of the city, starting from Orthodoxy, as the main religion of the city to the religious sites of various other religious communities which make Novi Sad a multicultural centre.

7. SUSTAINABLE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL TOURISM AT SACRED SITES

Tourism based on sacred sites, whether religious or cultural, should be developed in a sustainable form, bearing in mind that mass visits of sacred sites can ruin the peace and the principal church values.

In addition to religious motives, tourists are attracted by various forms of attractiveness and authenticity, which are always present in religious buildings and monastery complexes.

Today, motives for travel in religious tourism are quite diverse. A religious tourist attraction may be thought of as a place that draws tourists by virtue of some aspect of site such as an architecturally exceptional church building, an outstanding art collection, an important historical association, or, in some cases, a spectacular view from the terrace (Rinschede G., 1992).

Tourists often view visits to historic religious sites as opportunities for cultural and educational experiences. Interpretation can be used to help provide these experiences, while reducing some of the negative impacts of tourism. Interpretation can help the tourists better appreciate what they are seeing; reduce congestion and crowding by making tourists aware of alternative sites to visit; and explain appropriate tourist behaviors that minimize impacts on the site and its religious use (Olsen D., 2006).

Tourists should be introduced with the issue of environmental protection and nature, through the so-called "moral codex", which is usually compiled by ecologists and tourismologists, but in the case of religious tourism, clergy should also be consulted (Stamenkovic I., 2006).

Preserving cultural heritage at religious sites requires allowing the local community to continue using the site; however, religious practices can be disrupted by the presence of tourists (McKercher B., du Cros H., 2002).

In this context we should take into account the carrying capacity of these objects. The carrying capacity in this case refers to the maximum number of visitors who can visit a sacred site at one time, without disturbing the peace or principal purpose of this object. However, it is not possible to determine the exact number of tourist visits in Novi Sad’s churches because almost none of the Orthodox objects keep records on the number of visitors. The assessments may be approximate, but certainly not true and accurate. The carrying capacity of each object should be determined and the number of tourist visits should be kept and followed regularly, in order to keep tourism in a sustainable form.
Moreover, tourism at these sites should be developed without the commercialization of religious motives and values, because this could lead to the trivialization of these sites. When heritage religious sites and practices are commercialized and changed for easy tourist consumption, the site often loses its authenticity (McKercher B., du Cros H., 2002). In many renowned religious sites this is unfortunately becoming a big problem. For instance, souvenir shops sell mass-produced souvenirs with religious themes at very high prices, making the real business of that. This should certainly be prevented with respect to religion as the main church’s value.

Many heritage religious sites encourage donations to help compensate for the impacts of tourism, but donations rarely cover the cost of maintenance and preservation (Olsen D., 2006).

Provided tourism based on religious sites in Novi Sad gains greater scale in the future, it is suggested that travel agencies donate a percentage of sold arrangement for restoration and protection of these buildings which will create mutual benefit.

8. CONCLUSION

From this extensive presentation of Novi Sad’s sacred sites their current state and potentials we can conclude that religious and cultural tourism have a good perspective to become one of the dominant forms of tourism in the city tourism product of this town. The lack of the tourism organization as well as conservation, restoration and promotion of these sites in the past period have thwarted tourism development and major tourist visits.

In the similar city destinations, who do pay attention to these important issues, such as for instance Maribor, cultural and religious tourism began to flourish and attract a lot of visitors. Many interesting tours such as tours of cultural heritage and many attractive church tours, are being organized in Maribor, which makes a significant contribution to the development of cultural and religious tourism. Maribor already included "The tour of Maribor’s churches" in its tourism offer which showed good results (Božić et al., 2013). Novi Sad should implement this and other examples of good practice in the region and foster its culture and religion through sustainable and balanced tourism development.

This paper indicated priority fields for future improvements which should be the guidelines for plans and actions of the local tourism organization, as well as private companies taking into account the importance of cooperation between public and private sector which is very important for the tourism development and it should be beneficial for both sides.

Based on all above mentioned we can draw a conclusion that with necessary innovations, improvements and better engagement in the tourist offer the immense tourism potential of Novi Sad’s sacred sites could be realized and contribute to the creation of an image of Novi Sad as a developed tourist destination.

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Engagement of religious sites in the tourist offer of Novi Sad

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