

Current Methods for Valuing and Enhancing the Religious Tourism Potential in the Area of Archdiocese of Lower Danube

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Abstract: The tourism-religion, a biome insufficiently studied, is often a confusion between religious tourism and pilgrimage, being seen as a spiritual phenomenon that involves a certain level of culture meant to motivate the initiation path of the believers. As the contemporary world is in a constant confessional transformation it is necessary the concept of ecumenical tourism, which is a complex phenomenon that is based on the theological principle “ut unum sint” (that all may be one), the return to Christian unity from a beginning. Applying the theoretical model DSPIR (EEA, 2011, F. Kineast, WSL, 2012) which describes the interactions between contemporary society and religious landscape, we can value and enhance optimally the information about the religious patrimony of the Archdiocese of Lower Danube.

Keywords: diocese; religious heritage; Ecumenical tourism; religious landscape; pilgrimage

Introduction

The Diocese of Lower Danube was established by Decree of Cuza no 1617, 17 November 1864 initially comprising the counties of Covurlui, Braila, Bolgrad and Ismail (which was also the residence), founder of the diocese, instructor of the Prince Bishop Melchizedek Stefanescu. (Crăciun, 2000, p. 195)

It was required the creation of a new diocese since in 1829 is canceled the Raia of Braila, and with it the Metropolitan Proilavia, whose authority is restricted in 1812, when after the Russian-Turkish war, the territory between the Prut and Dniester is conquered and called Bessarabia. After the War of Independence and Peace of San Stefano (19.02-03.03.1878) the southern Bessarabia is snatched from the country's body falling under the jurisdiction of the Russian diocese.

More than two centuries Braila (1596-1829) was the headquarters of the Metropolitan Proilavia, which depended on the Patriarchate of Constantinople, where the Braila's bishop Daniil (in an act of July 4, 1772) was entitled

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“Metropolitan of Proilavia of Tomorovei (Reni), of the entire shore of the Danube, of Bessarabia and the Ukraine” (i.e. southern Transnistria) - CC Giurescu. (Grigorescu, 2013)

Valuing and enhancing the religious tourism potential using the DSPiR model

In order to analyze the socio-cultural phenomenon on the time scale (2012-2015) we have applied the DSPiR theoretical model, whose five guidelines aim at establishing the driving forces (F), the pressures on the ecclesiastic landscape (P), the current state of patrimony and restoration of church buildings (S) impact study (I) the adverse effects on the patrimony elements, and the response (R) resulted in a series of diocesan and parish initiatives in order to strengthen the restoration of ecclesiastical buildings.

1. The identified moving Forces (F) = Insufficient growth in the number of ecclesiastical buildings in the Galati county (2012-2015)

After 49 years of communist atheist regime, and 26 years since the bloody revolution of 1989, the faithful of the Galati martyr city, they return to the true values, to ecumenical ministry in the Church.

But ruthless traces of the past are felt in the need of rebuilding places of worship where Christians can practice the cult of love for God.

2. Pressure (P) = quantitative and qualitative analysis of ecclesiastical edifices assesses:

The ecclesiastical landscape is currently in a continuous dynamic due to human pressure, the faithful who find themselves increasingly in the cultural and religious millennial tradition, as we know “the Romanian people was born Christian.” The missionary work of the Apostle Andrew, “the first called upon”, the protector of Galati transpires from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians, which meant that also the "Scythians" could hear the word of God (3, 11).

The widening by agglutination of Galati towards Tirighina-Barbosi, the town puts us in the first millennia, being discovered the first Christian tomb (called according to the golden fibula “The Innocence”), which along with other pagan religious objects are found in the museum patrimony of the city. (Preda, 1994, p. 158) The tourists informed on the archaeological findings rediscover in the ecclesiastical buildings the genuine treasures of Christian experience and continuity to the Danube.

Table 1. Qualitative Date on the ecclesiastical buildings in the area of the Archdiocese Lower Danube. Case study Galati County¹

Management	CPS	EPM	PMT	UCP
Strict conservation Protection	1	0	0	0
Exposure to Museum patrimony	0	1	0	0
Practicing traditional crafts	0	0	1	0
Use of Landscape Quality for attracting tourists	0	0	0	1

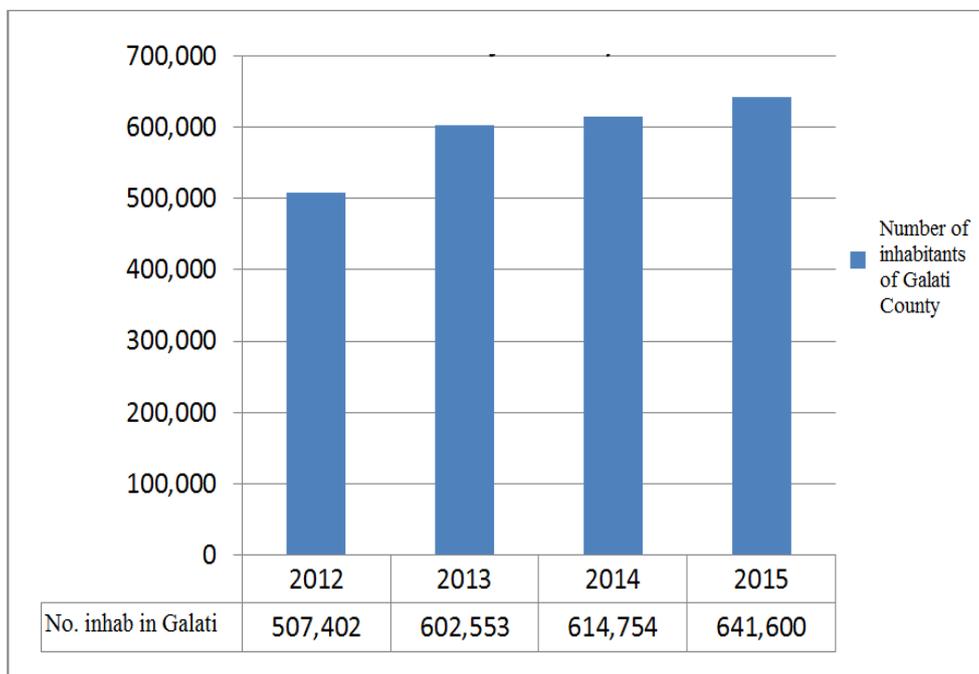


Chart 1². Number of inhabitants of Galati County

¹ *Biserică Misiune și Slujire, Ed. Arhiepiscopiei Dunării de Jos, vol 13 și 14, 2013-2014, Galați, p.449-p.515*

² www.insse.ro+ <http://judete.biz/populatie-galati/>

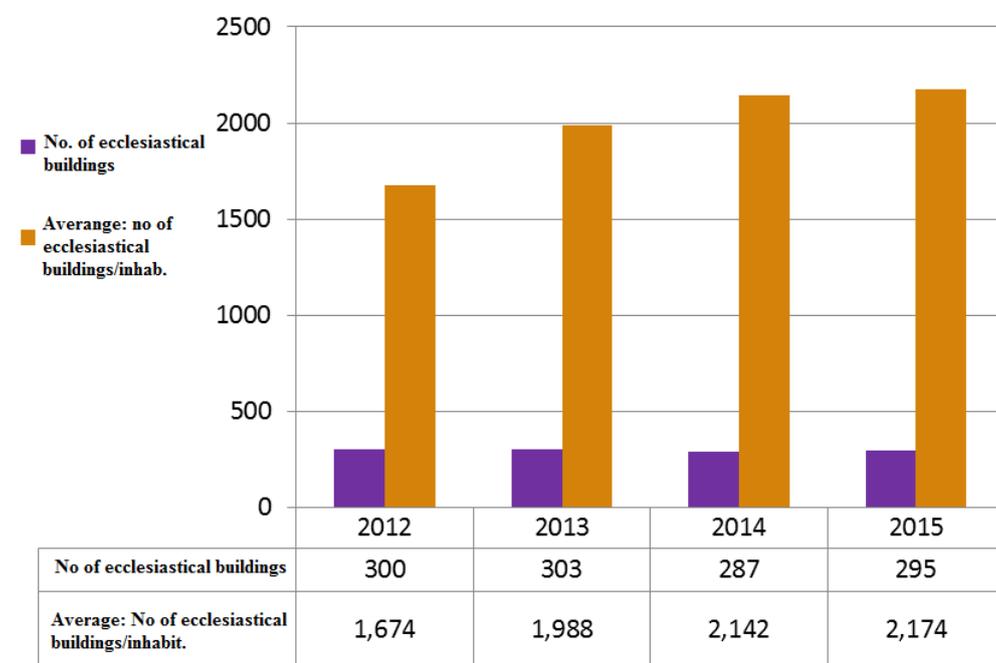


Chart 2¹. Quantitative data on the ecclesiastical buildings in the area of the lower Danube Archdiocese. Case study of Galati County

Source: (Biserică Misiune și Slujire/Church Mission and Ministry, Vol 13 and 14, 2014, pp. 449-515)

Currently we cannot speak of a **religious tourism**, but only of a **tourism potential**, the religious patrimony is low compared to the number of parishioners in Galati County, so it requires the construction of new religious buildings. In the analyzed interval it can be noticed the rapid elevation of the built areas, road infrastructure, accommodation, catering:

¹<http://www.biserici.org/index.php?menu=BIGL&start=240&order2013>; (Stănilă & Rotaru, 2014)

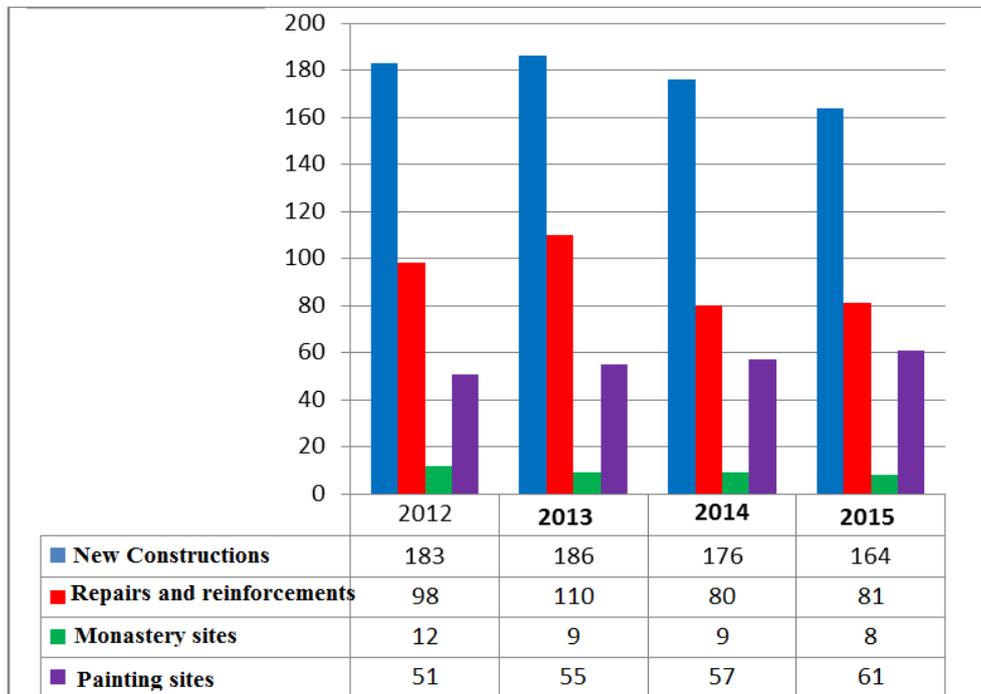


Chart 3. The pressure created on the ecclesiastical landscape in Galati County

Source: (Biserică Misiune și Slujire/Church Mission and Ministry, Vol. 13 and 16, 2013-2016, pp. 515, 459, 450, 483)

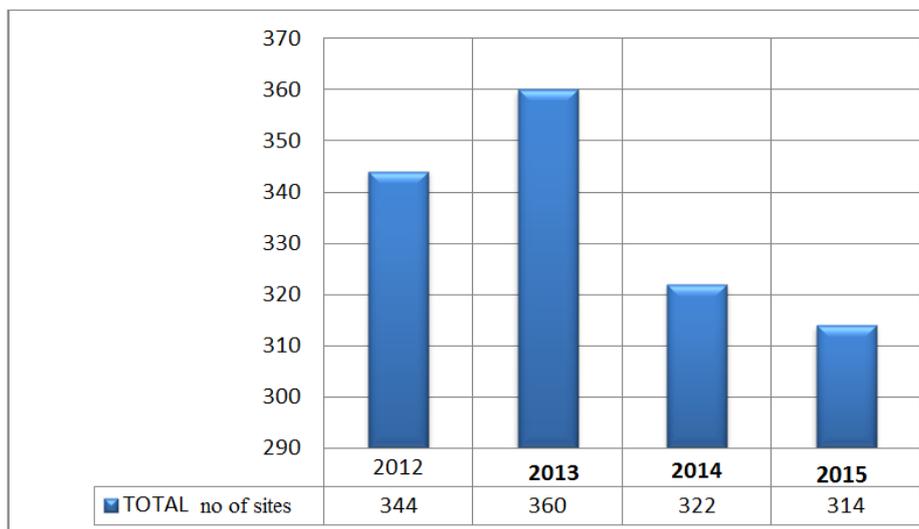


Chart 4. Total number of sites

3. Status (S) = Restoration of patrimony and church construction of the ecclesiastical landscape of the Galati County.

In the ecumenical tourism the Church (*Ecclesia*) has a double meaning that the “land of human existence in relation to God” (Dykstra, 1988, p. 419), but doctrinaire community, keeper of sacred traditions. The historical provocation on modernism of an increasingly secularized society, restoring the ecclesiastical landscape and of the religious patrimony, on long-term it aims at implementing viable strategies where self-financing is a reality and stakeholders have a well-established role in projects. The capital fluxes in order to restore the church buildings can be generated by various tourist groups, pilgrims in the diocese, which by the variety of services that they require it can contribute to widening the accommodations, the number of overnight stays, etc.

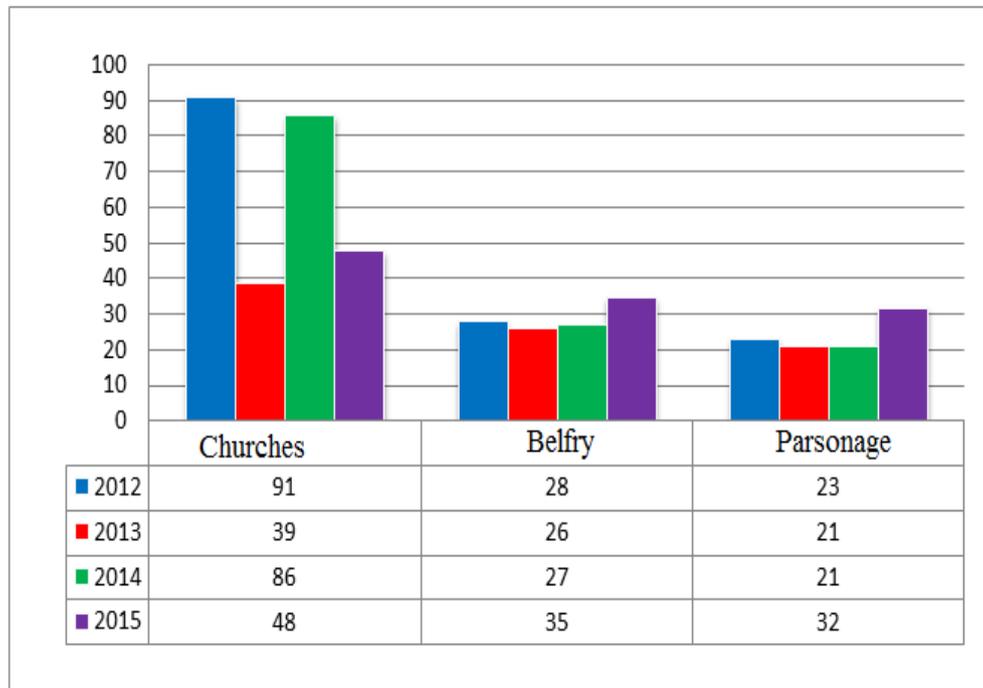


Chart 5. New church buildings

Source: (*Biserică Misiune și Slujire/Church Mission and Ministry, Vol. 13-16, 2013-2016*)

4. Impact (I) = Evaluation and monitoring adverse effects (earthquakes, rising water table) on the ecclesiastical landscape.

If the disastrous consequences of the Second World War, of the authoritarian political regimes have left their mark on unequal distribution of religious buildings, the nature has also contributed to weakening them (earthquakes, floods).

Table 2. Case Study. Galati County. Archdiocese of Lower Danube

Church - age	Location	Type of hazard
“Adormirea Maicii Domnului/ Assumption of the Virgin Mary” sanctified in 1913 ¹	Eternity Cemetery, Galati	Hydrologic- rising water table
Sfantul Dimitrie/Saint Dimitri -1894 ²	Bădălan neighborhood, Galati	Hydrologic- frequent floods
Catedrala arhiepiscopală/Archbishops cathedral -1917 (Pr. Hau, 2009, p. 946)	Galati	Hydrologic- rising water table
"Sf. Gheorghe/ Saint George 1941	Tecuci	The earthquake of August 31, 1903
The Church of Torcești	West of Galati County	Hydrologic- frequent floods



Figure 1. Deanery and faithful priests of Tecuci helping to build the dam in Galati 04.07.2010.

Source: <http://www.calauza.edj.ro/p=1193>

¹ ***Local newspaper *Viata libera/Free life*, 20.04.2013

² <http://byzantinearch.blogspot.ro/2009/10/biserica-sfantul-dimitrie-din-cartierul.html>

5. Response (R)*= diocesan and parish initiatives to strengthen, restoration of ecclesiastical buildings in Galati County. (Biserică Misiune și Slujire/Church Mission and Ministry, Vol. 13-16, 2013-2016, pp. 515, 459, 450, 483)

Due to the geographical location, as “*gate of Danubian Christendom*” (Crăciun, 2000, p. 195), Galati in the Archdiocese of Lower Danube has a spiritual openness generated by visiting the elements of tourist religious interest, but the national economic priorities are not directed towards a viable tourism to exploit the existing potential optimally.

Accessing the Regional Operational Program *REGIO DE SE-2007-2013 for consolidation, rehabilitation and modernization of the Episcopal Palace with money from EU funds is an important step in supporting ecumenical tourism, rebuilding ecclesiastical buildings, nowadays being appreciated more by the Romanian tourists.

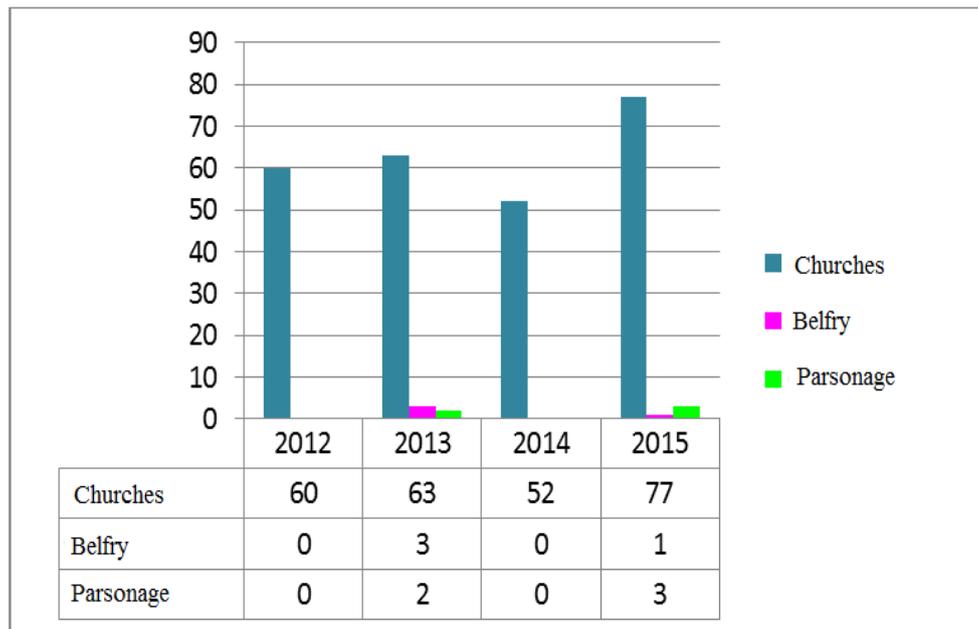


Chart 6. Repairs and enforcements

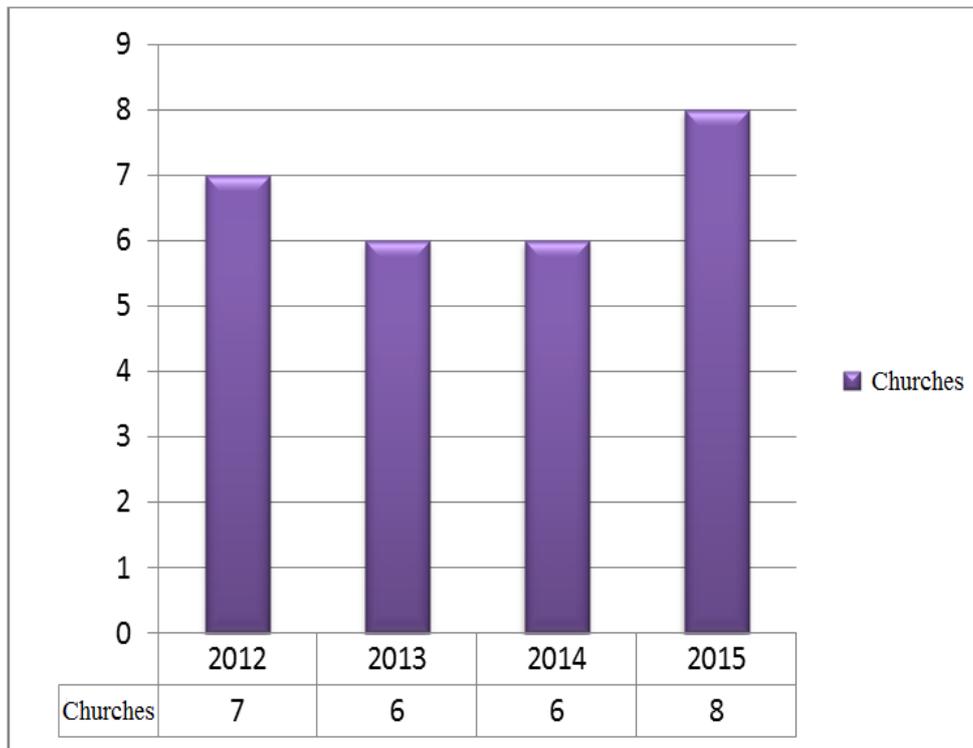


Chart 7. Monastery sites.



Figure 1. The DPSIR Model

Source: (EEA, 2011, Kienast, WSL 2012)

Conclusion

Using the theoretical DPSIR method, the formulated scientific objective of research of the Archdiocese of Lower Danube patrimony, identified as a motivational element in the religious tourism dynamics flow the statistical analysis over a time interval of four years (2012-2015), it was found a sustained effort for building and restoration of churches, but still unvalued to its actual capacity.

A viable marketing strategy in the near future we believe it would be a generous one, covering both places of worship of Christian Orthodox belief, and also other denominations, especially since this is an area of cultural-spiritual interference of historical provinces of Moldova and Muntenia, being particularly special from the perspective of diversity and multiculturalism confessions. Churches

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