

A MODEL OF MARKETING PRODUCT IN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE SITES: CASE STUDY FOR THE MONASTERY OF HODOS-BODROG

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Abstract: *Religious Heritage Sites can benefit from adopting a marketing perspective. This paper's objective is to develop a new model of marketing product for Religious Heritage Sites. Retrieving some peculiarities from social marketing, and more specific the religious one, and from services marketing, and more specific the touristic one, the proposed model has been illustrated through a case study for the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog. The proposed visitors' matrix for Religious Heritage Sites' shows different levels of consumers' interest and engagement that should be considered when creating the product, in order to offer something of interest for each category of customers. The core product is offered through tangible and intangible components, becoming the adopted product when changes appear in the the consumer's way of thinking and behaving. Yet, the Religious product is not only goods and services, but it uses these in order to create the finality product – the salvation -, while the finality product for Religious Heritage is the consumers' satisfaction. Adding some touristic and recreational activities, organized by third parties, to the product will create an experience that exceeds visitors' expectations. To illustrate and ensure a better understanding of the model, it has been applied to the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog.*

Keywords: *cultural product, Religious Heritage Site, cultural marketing, marketing, model*

JEL: M31, L83, L31

Introduction

Cultural tourism existed since ancient times, as Antipater of Sidon, a Greek poet, wrote about his visits to the remarkable constructions known as The Seven Wonders of the World, in 140 BC. Traveling to holy places also existed since antiquity (Tala and Padurean, 2008) in all major religions. In time, the list of heritage sites that form the cultural touristic market and the way they are popularized has changed. For instance, currently, World Heritage List by UNESCO (2021) enlists 897 cultural sites, while online platforms, like TripAdvisor, are offering valuable information to hundreds of millions of people each month (TripAdvisor, 2021), regarding accommodation, food and experiences, including thousands of cultural ones.

Before the pandemic, cultural tourism had a growing trend, with at least 40% tourists worldwide experiencing culture at their holiday destination (CBI, 2021) and 25% being interested in religious objectives (CBI, 2020). During COVID-19 pandemic, in Europe, culture consumption decreased, 90% (over 85 000 institution) all over the world closed temporary during the pandemic and 10% closed permanently because of economic hardship (OECD, 2020). Also, touristic traveling decreased by 61% (from 2,8 billion to 1,1 billion) in the first pandemic year (Eurostat, 2021).

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Romanian cultural tourism faces many challenges: high costs involved in the rehabilitation, difficult access because of the infrastructure, poor accessibility to information about Cultural Heritage and so on. Restoration and sustainable valorization of cultural heritage has been a priority for Romania's Regional Operational Program for a while now, but there is still much to do.

Also, nowadays, the restrictions meant to restrain COVID-19 constituted a new series of challenges for Romanian cultural tourism. In 2020, compared with 2019, before COVID-19, the number of foreigner tourists visiting Romania decreased with 61% and the number of Romanians visiting other countries with 59% (INS, 2021a). The percentage of recreation, sport and culture expenditures out of the total household consumption expenditure decreased from 4.2% in 2019 to 2.1% in 2020; in 2020, the audience of performances and concerts dropped by 81%, the visitors of museums and public collections by 56%, and the audience in cinemas by 75% (INS, 2021b).

Even though in 2021 things improved, cultural services are still very much affected by the pandemic. This threat to the very existence of cultural institutions can be transformed into an opportunity to evolve. Cultural services are going through a series of transformation – open-air cultural events to increase the audience, audio guides devices or apps to avoid personal contact, offering COVID tests at the gates of the event, offering virtual access to the expositions etc.

In the meantime, religious organizations didn't suffer as much: while most cultural organizations were closed, churches were always opened; while people needed a digital COVID certificate to go to the museum, they didn't need one to go to church. This constitutes a great opportunity for religious sites to grow their number of visitors interested in the cultural experience. Still, the religious experience was affected by the pandemic to a certain extent. American Psychological Association (Goodman, 2020) emphasize an old observation brought to life by the pandemic – during crises, some people come closer to religion, finding peace there, while others are struggling with their faith.

Considering all these challenges, nowadays more than ever, Religious Heritage Sites need a marketing perspective to bring direction and consistency to the strategic actions meant to increase their visibility and their number of visitors. This paper's objective is proposing a new model of marketing product for Religious Heritage Sites. First, the model was built starting with the peculiarities of social marketing, and more specific religious marketing, and services marketing, and more specific touristic marketing. Secondly, the model was applied to a very old and impressive Romanian religious heritage site – the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog – in order to complete it, test it and illustrate it.

Religious Heritage Sites as marketing products - literature review

Placed at the intersection of touristic and recreational, cultural and religious fields, the Religious Heritage Sites constitute very complex and peculiar products. While tourism and recreational industries are foremost profitable businesses, marketing being highly used in this field, culture and religion are governed by higher values, where money - although needed - are not considered as important.

There is a lot of criticism to take into consideration when proposing ways to implement marketing in cultural (Walle, 2010) and, even more so, in religious organizations (Shepherd, 2006; Wrenn, 2010; Strambu-Dima, 2008) – wasting money offered to God, intruding people's lives, manipulating, the idea that interested people will come etc. -, but the most important is that cultural and religious "organizations cannot aim, from moral reasons, to adapt their whole activity to the requests of the target groups. A university, a hospital or a church are somehow reticent in the satisfaction of all requests from the part of a client, as the service supplier is on a superior position than the beneficiaries of these services. It is supposed that the teacher knows better than his students what they have to learn, that the doctor knows better than the patient which is the most appropriate treatment, and the priest knows better than parishioners which is the path to Salvation. The same, when talking about culture, a writer, sculptor, painter, musician or film director proposes his own

artistic vision towards a subject, and they invite the public to accept it” (Angheluta, Strambu-Dima, Zaharia, 2009, p. 199).

Adding tourism into the equation, new problems appear. Walle expresses his worries regarding the use of touristic marketing strategies in cultural organizations: “although thoughtful customer-oriented strategies need to be employed for cultural tourism ventures to be successful, special care must be taken so the host community is not undercut or undermined in the process” (Walle, 2010, p. 56-57). Also, Simone-Charteris and Boyd (2010) emphasize that sometimes religious leaders might be reticent to tourists coming in a place of worship, having different behaviors and expectancies than their parishioners and pilgrims. In this case, religious leaders might not cooperate with outside stakeholders (government, urban planners, tourism managers, economic development agencies etc.) to encourage touristic activities, and they could even restrict tourism at their sites.

Even so, exposure is usually wanted by churches, as by any cultural institution, and marketing helps ensuring that they are on the map, figuratively (on people’s interest) and literally (on Google Maps or touristic maps), in order to be visited. But it is important to keep in mind that a good definition of a cultural or religious heritage product starts from the organization’s mission and the characteristics of its target public. Analyzing these, will point out the essential elements needed to build a complete marketing product, approved by cultural or religious authorities, and of interest for the visitors, in the same time being able to increase the sustainable valorization of cultural heritage.

Religious organization’s mission. The mission of an organization refers to its basic principles. Its’ role is to differentiate the organization from similar ones, being a reference point for the strategic processes. The mission usually includes: organization’s purpose, the position it wants to attain on the market and how it intends to get there, the basic values of the organization, the presentation of the target markets or segments, the main products, the geographical area occupied, the philosophy of the organization, etc.

In religious organizations, customer orientation, while essential, is outperformed by mission orientation (Angheluta, Strambu-Dima, Zaharia, 2009), which makes defining the mission even more important. There are several levels of defining the mission for a religious organization – the Christianity’s mission; this is adopted and adapted by each religious denomination’s mission, adding their own views and perspectives; then, the local church’s mission starts by adopting Christianity’s mission and the religious denomination’s mission, and completing them with particular aspects.

The mission statement of every Christian church is based on the following words of Jesus Christ: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (The Bible, Mathew 28, verses 19 and 20). The efficiency of religious organizations’ activity is measured, first of all, by the extent to which they have fulfilled this mission.

Starting from this, each religious denomination and local church builds its own mission, including their values and objectives. For instance, Schawchuck et al. (1992) consider that the mission of the religious organization is faith, related to the vertical relationship, and fraternity, related to the horizontal relationship. Both relationships are visible in the mission of Romanian Orthodox Church (Basilica.ro, 2016), which strives to be a place where people can test trial the new world promised in the Bible and become the new creatures God wants them to be, while offering them help in solving their secular needs.

Types of visitors interested in Religious Heritage Sites. People can visit a Religious Heritage Site either as a religious experience, in pilgrimage, or primarily as a cultural experience, visiting sacred sites, churches, temples etc. (CBI, 2020; Simone-Charteris and Boyd, 2010). While for the first category, the churches may or may not use marketing, since most of the time pilgrims will travel anyway, for the second category, it is imperative to use marketing in order to attract the tourists to the site, considering that they have to choose one or few out of many options of cultural products in the visited area.

Definitions of tourism offered over time by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) demarcate other types of travelers: tourists are traveling at least 80 km and for at least 24 hours (Westcott and Anderson, 2021), but not more than one year (Ragoonaden, 2015), while excursionists are “day trippers”, staying close to home, but visiting some attractions, dine at a restaurant and go home for the night (Westcott and Anderson, 2021). Also, travelers can be domestic, living in the given country, inbound or outbound, visiting from another country (Westcott and Anderson, 2021).

Therefore, there are four types of visitors interested in Religious Heritage Sites (fig. no.1), considering their interest for religion or leisure, as well as the duration and distance of their trip: the parishioner, that lives close by and goes to that church fairly often, being interested in the religious experience; the pilgrim, that lives further, so that he cannot go there too often, but he is interested in the offered religious experience; the excursionist, interested more in the cultural and recreational part of the experience than the religious one, traveling a maximum of 80 km and going home the same day; the tourist is also interested more in the culture and recreation, but he lives further, traveling for several days.

| | Religious Interest | Leisure Interest |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Local (<80 km, <24 h) |  Parishioner |  Excursionist |
| Nonlocal (>80 km, >24 h) |  Pilgrim |  Tourist |

Fig. no. 1 The matrix of Religious Heritage Sites’ visitors
Source: the author

Each type of visitor has different needs and expectations: the parishioner and the pilgrim need a profound religious experience, possible in a solemn atmosphere; the excursionist and the tourist need to be entertained with different aspects of the product; the pilgrim and the tourist need accommodation; all of them need dinning, infrastructure and other amenities that make the experience positive. In the same time, all types of visitors need auxiliary services, next to the one offered of the religious organization - transportation, dinning, maybe other touristic attractions and accommodation etc.

Consumers interested in Cultural Heritage are equally men and women, usually in the age group of 20-29 years, having at least a degree (70%), having an occupation related to culture (30%) and they usually visit museums during holidays (Richards, 2007). They are sophisticated, well educated, morally responsible and ‘politically correct’ (Moscardo and Pearce, 1999, cited in Lubbe, 2003), they enjoy travelling, even by public transportation, seeking interaction with local people (Smith, 2003), are highly educated, earn good money, prefers to stay in hotels and enjoy shopping (Silberberg, 1994).

Understanding the consumers’ peculiarities and perspectives, organizations can build an attractive and complex product for them, adding to the core product – that cannot be changed without affecting the personality of the religious organization or the integrity heritage site – auxiliary goods, services and ideas.

The model of a marketing product for Religious Heritage Sites

The product is a generic concept that refers to that "something" that can be offered by the organization to be noticed, bought and consumed by its target audience. This product can be a physical good or a service, it can be offered for a price or for free, as in the case of products offered by non-profit organizations, it can be an idea or even a person, as in the case of politicians. Regardless of its nature, in marketing, the product is shaped to meet the needs of its target audience.

As presented before, there are four target audiences, each having very different needs and expectations. In order to be valuable for all four types of customers, the product should have components – goods or services, ideas, life principles or eternal results of faith -, addressed to each of these, which means the product will have a high complexity.

Methodology. First, the analyze of secondary data available in the literature has been undertaken, considering the social marketing, and more specific religious marketing, and services marketing, and more specific touristic marketing. This way, the peculiarities of the marketing product for religious heritage sites have been identified. Secondly, an observational study has been realized on the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog, to identify the components of this product from a marketing perspective. Based on these, a model has been developed (Fig. no. 2) and, then, illustrated in a case study on the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog.

Building the model starting from secondary data analysis and observation of a monastery's offer. Placed at the intersection of touristic and recreational, cultural, social and religious fields, the Religious Heritage Sites constitute very complex and peculiar products. All these types of products – touristic and recreational, cultural, social and religious – have tangible and intangible elements, and use auxiliary services and products (see Fig. no.2). Tangible elements can be natural (e.g. the Natural Park around the Mures River, next to the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog, the bull's horn) or man-made (e.g. the old and new church, the objects in the museum of the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog), touristic attractions and in the same time cultural products or religious places (e.g. the whole monastic complex), as landscapes (e.g. the Natural Park around the Mures River), buildings (e.g. churches, tower), paintings and other symbols for otherwise intangible aspects (e.g. icons, interior design with its spiritual meaning), books (e.g. prayer books, history books), souvenirs etc., while intangible elements can be religious services, religious ceremonials and practices, legends (e.g. the bull discovering the miracle-worker icon) and history (e.g. one of the oldest monasteries in Romania), image (e.g. old, beautiful, miraculous and peaceful), the created atmosphere (e.g. peace, far from the hustle of regular lives), social programs (e.g. running a school, offering help to people in need), membership in a community of faith (e.g. regular religious services for regular visitors), experiences within the church (e.g. special events) etc. The auxiliary services can consist in food, accommodation and transportation, cultural events etc., but most of these haven't been observed in the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog.

The religious product has some similarities with few types of marketing products. As Cultural products, the religious one has a symbolic message and is the intellectual propriety of the artist (Throsby, 2010). The religious product has an artistic side also, through music and design of the church, paintings and sculptures etc. that transmit ideas and concepts in a creative way.

As on social marketing, religious products are not only goods (tangible) and services (intangible), but also ideas and behaviors, once the ideas have been internalized. These are very well suited to religious marketing. Religious organizations are transmitting their core product through ideas expressed in religious services, symbols, books etc., determining changes in people's way to think and behave (adopting values and principles, fasting, not drinking alcohol, not having an abortion etc.). This changed person, with new ideas, principles and behaviors is now a believer, that adopted the product offered by the religious organization (fig. no. 2). Also, there are some religious products that are closer to regular products because they are sold - religious books, icons, crosses etc.

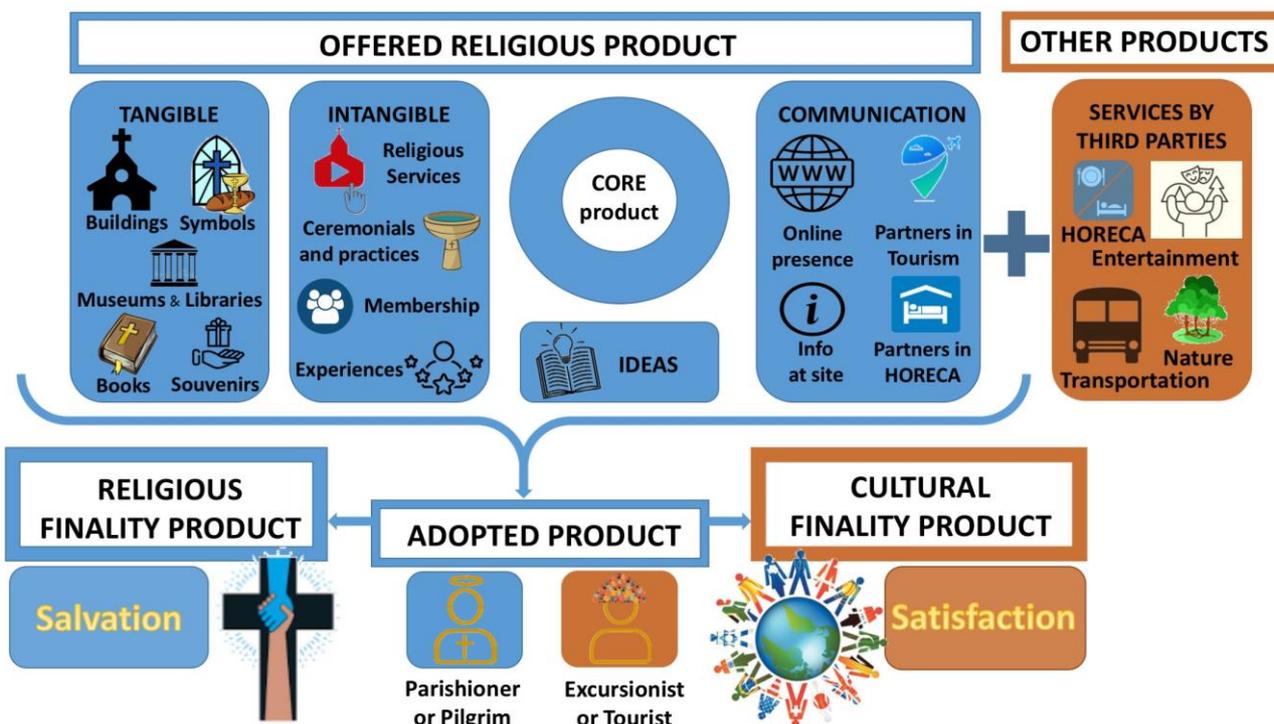


Fig. no. 2 Model of the Religious Product, next to auxiliary services specific to tourism
 Source: the author

From touristic marketing we learn to create an experience, adding to the offered product a story to make people connect with the organization, a relaxing atmosphere (e.g. a bench next to the river) and offering auxiliary services (e.g. concerts, food, accommodation – named experiences in fig. 2). Also, since the pandemic, churches face a difficulty that tourism, as other types of services, solved a long time ago – the impossibility to have too many “clients” at once. A hotel or an airplane that has a limited number of beds or seats either increases the prices so that the request decrease, or reduces the prices during periods with lower demand in order to distribute the demand more balanced. In the context of COVID-19, the church has to find its own solutions. For instance, some were doubling the number of religious services, so that everybody can attend without breaking the laws regarding keeping the distance.

Adding touristic and recreational aspects to the equation, appears the need to complete the already complex product with other products offered by third parties (fig. no. 2): infrastructure and amenities by the local and national authorities, transportation which might be personal, public or offered by a touristic company, accommodation by companies or even the church, other attractions and leisure activities in the area, and even the natural environment.

According to Balaure et. al. (2002), marketing products are more than objects to be sold; they combine not only corporal (tangible) and non-corporal (intangible) elements, but also communication (e.g. information, advertising) and image (e.g. traditional vs modern). Churches can inform their public through their websites and other online presence (interviews, blog posts etc.), information panels at site, guided tours etc. Because advertisements are not very appreciated or used by the Romanian churches, two ways of efficient communication remain: first, approaching touristic organizations to insert the monastery in their offer; and second, creating great experiences to exceed visitors’ expectations, who later will offer online reviews, personal recommendations etc. The image is often highly dependent on the core product, that cannot be changed, but it is also influenced by the organizations’ and clerics’ behavior and customers’ experiences.

The product offered by religious organizations is very complex and can vary from one religious organization to another. There is, however, the certainty that all religious products are based on the core product (fig. no.2).

People have two kinds of fundamental needs that religious organizations can meet through their core product — a fundamental, deep need to believe in divinity, and other auxiliary needs — to understand holy things, to help them overcome difficult times in life, to membership etc. Any religious product, any program developed by a religious organization, must provide viable answers to the needs of its believers, and for this, while building the religious offer, both categories of needs must be taken into account.

Discussing the religious offer, Max Weber spoke of "salvation goods", without defining them clearly, but Jörg Stolz (2006) seem to believe that Weber referred to both goals (e.g. eternal life) and means (e.g. rituals, good works, sacraments, faith etc.) and that they satisfy different psychological and social needs. Another perspective is offered by Levitt (Kotler, 1997), who presented five levels of the product: the core product (responds to the consumer essential need), the generic product (the basic product), the expected product (the product that costumers expect to receive), the augmented product (the product exceed customer's expectations, offering supplementary benefits and services) and the potential product (the way that the product might look in the future). Martin (2006) apply in a religious context two of these dimensions – the core product, including what is sacred in a religious organization, and the augmented product, parts of the offer that are not considered sacred. These views are considering a gradually transformation of the religious product, which also happens in the proposed model (Fig. no.2), being built on three stages of the religious product in someone's life.

The proposed model include three phases of the product, as follows:

- The *offered product* includes the core product, ideas and principles, tangible and intangible components, and communication. Of these, some may be modified to better meet the needs of believers, while others may not be affected by strategies:
 - The *core product* refers to the fundamental teaching of faith, the doctrine or rituals of divine source, that characterizes and differentiates one denomination from all others, and cannot be changed or influenced by marketing strategies without irreparably affecting the personality of the organization (Strambu-Dima, 2011). This core product is translated in ideas transmitted to the believers, through communication, tangible and intangible components.
 - The *tangible and intangible components* of the product often can be changed by marketing strategies, getting closer to the parishioners' needs and desires (e.g. adapting the time schedule, creating programs for certain publics - children, young people, adults, family, the elderly). Still, some prudence may be needed when choosing appropriate changes, because some components are sacred (e.g. symbols, ceremonials) and some reflect the organization's image, which should remain consistent to its identity (e.g. buildings' architectural style).
 - The *communication* is the easiest component to adapt in order to reach people and each religious organization can decide how to use the available communication channels. Considering the touristic aspects involved in religious heritage products, next to regular communication of religious organizations (e.g. religious services, religious TV and radio channels, sometimes billboards), an online presence becomes increasingly important in today's society, especially since the pandemic, and also partnerships with touristic organizations that can support the church's cultural-touristic activity (e.g. touristic agencies to introduce the site in their day trips, HORECA to ensure auxiliary services to their visitors or to encourage the visitation of the religious heritage site).
- The *adopted product* refers to religion in a practical form, as it is acquired by the believer (knowledge of the Divinity, principles, beliefs, conceptions of life, etc.). This happens in service marketing, where, although the service is the same, it cannot be repeated identically,

differing from one person to another due to their active participation. In terms of the religious products, the believer's active participation allows him acquiring and practicing to a greater or lesser extent the 'fundamental teaching of faith' or the core product. Similarly, the cultural consumer understands and appreciates the heritage site as a cultural product according to his level of knowledge, past experiences, interest etc.

- The process does not end here, however, because no church aims to offer services or icons or a common value system. These are just tools or steps that help the believer to obtain a transcendental product, the *finality product*, which could be salvation or eternal life, this being the final result of the whole experience of faith. On another hand, the cultural visitor of the religious heritage site acquires as a finality product a certain level of satisfaction.

Basically, these three components of the religious product represent different phases of the believer's relationship with the divinity and the religious organization, all starting from that set of dogmas that we have called "the fundamental teaching of faith" or core product. Simultaneously, a visitor that has only a cultural interest on the religious heritage site receives the same product (e.g. sees the same buildings and souvenirs, even listens to the same religious service), but he evaluates the product from a cultural and touristic perspective.

Building a religious heritage product, it's necessary to respect 'the fundamental teaching of faith' the church promotes (religious marketing), to preserve, restore and support valorization of the cultural heritage (cultural marketing), to seek not only the wellbeing of the organization, but also the community's wellbeing (social marketing), while creating value for different categories of consumers (spiritual for parishioners and pilgrims, cultural and recreational for excursionists and tourists).

Case Study: Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog as a marketing product

Only 9 out of 897 cultural sites enlisted in the World Heritage List by UNESCO are located on Romanian territory. There are 16 other Romanian cultural sites submitted to the Tentative List, and many others that aren't on any list, although they have an incredible value. One of these unlisted is Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog, one of the oldest monastic institutions in Romania.

Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog is a Cultural Heritage Site and its marketing approach must involve both cultural marketing and religious marketing strategies. As a cultural site, its main purpose is conservation of corporal heritage and offering a remarkable cultural experience; as a religious site, its main purpose is offering a profound religious experience, enhanced by the corporal heritage. Both cultural and religious marketing have a non-profit approach (social marketing), satisfy a self-actualization need on Maslow's Pyramid (Veghes, 2021) and cannot adapt their whole activity to the requests of targeted groups, because they are submitting to higher purposes.

Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog, first mentioned in 1177, situated within the Mures Floodplain Natural Park, in Arad County, has an impressive history and legend. The building we can see nowadays was built in 1370, in byzantine style; with a baroque roof from 1766. It was built with roman bricks and stones. The paintings have been painted in 1658, by Nicodim Diaconul. There you can find frescoes from 17th century, a Venice Psalm Book from 1520, and the skull of a bull. The monastery's tradition says that the bull found the Saint Virgin and Baby Jesus Miracle Making Icon and a bucket full with gold, enough to build the church, without plastering the north wall, which cannot be plastered until today. Another legend says that a heartless monk, Metodie, has been damned by his mother that earth does not receive his ashes. Because his coffin kept coming up the earth, people covered it with two tombstones, but his heart was petrified on the wall of the church and people can still hear it.

The mission of Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog starts from the Romanian Orthodox Church mission (Basilica.ro, 2016) to create a space similar to the perfect world promised in the Bible, while offering help for people's secular needs. Related to the specificity of Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog and its mission, the monk from the documentary Trinitas (2017) declared that people come there for "peace, quiet, love, humility". Its website declares that "Hodoș-Bodrog Monastery has always

watched over the tireless preaching of the Christian faith, keeping awake the conscience of the faithful who frequented this holy establishment on Sundays and holidays, but especially on the occasion of feasts.”

The fact that, at least for now, the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog didn't try to actively attract visitors, it is obvious both in the cited documentary (Trinitas, 2017) and on the website, declaring that they worked tirelessly, but only for “the faithful who frequented this holy establishment”. Even so, during the last few years, the online one page history became a website, and now articles, interviews and blog posts presented it. From just a few mentions on the Internet regarding it seven years ago, nowadays, it has a decent online presence, which for sure attracts more tourists than before.

Consumer needs. The product responds especially to the consumer's need of self-actualization and self-development of religious and cultural nature, but also to the need of social recognition regarding social and cultural statute, affiliation to one's nation's history, and leisure. By visiting the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog, the believer (parishioner or pilgrim) will have a peaceful religious experience, while the tourist or the excursionists will experience over 800 years of history and will discover remarkable and representative values of our cultural tangible and intangible heritage (Veghes, 2021).

Target public. Professor Veghes (2021) consider that the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog has three main segments of targeted public: consumers that are seeking *spiritual or self-development experiences* are over 18, at least average education and income, residents in Arad County or tourists passing by, enjoy traveling and leisure, being religious or passionate by culture and history; consumers that are seeking *educational tourism* are children, 12-18 years old, residents in Arad, Bihor, Hunedoara, Timis or Caras-Severin Counties, average income per capita and a family interested in culture and education; and weekend *excursionists* are young, residents within an 80 km radius, enjoying local culture and leisure activities.

This case study shows both the results of the observational study on the Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog, identifying the components of the product that it already offers, and the illustration of the proposed model, adding some components that would enhance the visitors' experience.

The product. The Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog is a historic, religious and cultural destination, untapped yet at its value as a touristic objective.

Currently, the **offered product** consists in (Trinitas, 2017; the observational study):

- **core product:**
 - knowledge of God;
 - religious values, principles and doctrines;
 - promise of salvation;
 - etc.
- **ideas:**
 - obedience to God;
 - humility;
 - miracles exist;
 - believers need the church to find peace and salvation;
 - etc.
- **tangible elements:**
 - old church;
 - tower of the bell;
 - new church;
 - the saints' relics;
 - old icon which is said is miracle-worker;
 - bull's horn;
 - beautiful garden, with flowers, trees and benches;
 - large parking lot;

- guest-house;
- panels and signs in the yard;
- monastery museum objects art before the 18th century;
- library of old ecclesiastic books, starting with 16th century;
- stone crosses on each side of the narrow road leading to the monastery;
- toilet;
- no entry tax;
- Mures River and the Natural Park;
- etc.
- *intangible elements:*
 - peace, quiet, love and humility;
 - long history and many religious personalities;
 - the image of being one of the oldest monasteries in Romania;
 - the legend of the bull finding the miracle icon, where the monastery has been built;
 - the unplastered north wall, because the gold from the bucket found by the bull next to the icon was not enough for it, so even today, it cannot be plastered;
 - the legend of the heartless monk, Metodie, whose petrified heart can still be heard;
 - event - the procession organized on The Way of the Cross on 14th August, with the occasion of Assumption of Virgin Mary;
 - event - Epiphany procession at the Mures River;
 - etc.

The offer is already complex and interesting enough to be attractive, not only for parishioners and pilgrims, but also for regular tourists and excursionists. Still, having a priceless historical and cultural value and being situated between two villages, on an unpopulated road, communication is key.

- *communication*
 - information on the panels on their courtyard;
 - tour guides;
 - online presence due to the monastery's website, blog posts and YouTube videos created by third parties about visiting the monastery, and touristic websites, as romaniatourism.com, TripAdvisor etc.
 - included in pilgrimage tours;
 - included in some touristic guided tours of Arad County;
 - etc.

In order to exceed visitors' expectations, the religious heritage product Monastery of Hodos-Bodrog can be completed with:

- creating a touristic audio or mobile app guide, especially in the context of the pandemic, when it is not recommended to stay close one another;
- souvenir store;
- vending machine for water and sandwiches;
- glass-painting classes for children visiting the monastery with the school;
- concerts at night for people living maximum 80 km away;
- promoting the monastery as one of the oldest monasteries in Romania (product's *image*) to the tourism organizations – touristic agencies, travel websites, travel bloggers;
- emphasizing that people can use the monastery's guest house if they want to have a special experience;
- flyers to guest houses and hotels near the monastery;

- etc.

Other nearby non-profit or for-profit organizations, could offer entertaining services – rustic restaurants and accommodation, Aventura Park, medieval festival etc., extending even more the product. The Natural Heritage completes nicely the visitors' experience, the monastery being situated in Mures Floodplain Natural Park. The public authorities could help, too, by ensuring public transportation from Arad city center and a good quality of the roads. Even though these aspects have nothing to do with the monastery as organization, they complete the product, as it is perceived by the consumers.

The adopted product proves an advanced participation of the visitor, being either a believer that acquires knowledge of the Divinity, values and principles, conceptions of life, new behaviors etc., or a tourist, getting a new perspective of history, art and faith. *The finality product*, defined before as a transcendental product, is the final result of adopting the religious concepts and beliefs. This could be salvation, as defined by Weber, for the religious visitors, while for the tourist we could consider it as being the satisfaction resulted at the end of the trip.

Every cultural product should be an incredible experience, involving multiple organizations and multiple products summed in one. This way, people will be motivated to increase their culture consumption contributing to the development of the cultural organization and local community, and to the maintenance of heritage sites.

Conclusions

This paper's importance derives from its theoretical and practical implications on Religious Heritage marketing and tourism. It offers a new perspective on religious and cultural products, viewed at the interference of social marketing and services marketing, enhanced with traits of touristic marketing.

A new model of marketing product for Religious Heritage Sites (Fig. no.2) has been proposed and illustrated through a case study. Religious marketing is different from other types of marketing and this is reflected in the model – the core product that cannot be changed, the levels of adoption of the religious offer from a simple visit of the excursionist or tourist to the deep religious experience of the parishioner or pilgrim etc. Also, having a secondary purpose of touristic nature creates the need to complete the offer with services offered by third parties – transportation, accommodation, food, entertainment etc.

A second personal contribution is the matrix of Religious Heritage Sites' visitors (Fig. no.1), presenting four types of visitors, each with their specific needs and expectations. While the pilgrim and the tourist, traveling for longer than 80 km and 24 hours, need accommodation and food services, the parishioner and the excursionist may be satisfied with few hours of peace on the premises of the monastery. While the parishioner and the pilgrim need deep religious experiences, the excursionist and the tourist need to be entertained. And all of them need infrastructure and good quality services.

Throughout this paper, several managerial implications were emphasized:

- There are four type of visitors, considering the distance they travel to get to the monastery and whether their interest is religious or cultural. The product should be shaped in such a manner that each of them find what they need and enjoy.
- Religious Heritage products should be viewed as being at the intersection of several fields, because: the importance of the symbolic message overcomes the importance of physical components, as in cultural marketing; the product is formed not only out of goods and services, but also of ideas and behaviors, as in social marketing; the experience is what draws people to consume the product and customers' participation is part of the product, as in service marketing; there is a need of auxiliary products (accommodation, transportation and food services) as in tourism; and there are parts

of the product that cannot be changed because they are sacred, which is specific to the religious organizations.

- Understanding that there are parts of the product that cannot be changed through marketing strategies, on religious grounds, and honest communication about this between marketers and clerics could help adapting the marketing tools to the needs of the churches, especially the ones that are part of the Romanian cultural heritage and encourage cultural tourism.
- Since some parts of the product in the cultural tourism cannot be provided by the monastery (transportation, sometimes accommodation and food services, entertainment, infrastructure etc.), there is a need of cooperation with other parties (national and regional institutions, cultural organizations, and private per-profit or non-profit organization), all concurring to visitors' satisfaction.
- Communication is key in achieving both religious and cultural touristic objectives, therefore it should be as variate as possible in order to reach all types of potential visitors. Modern communication channels offer opportunities for churches to convey their message more effectively and directly, while remaining loyal to their identity and values. For instance, a church that considers advertisement not being appropriate for their message could use other types of communication, like religious radio or TV programs or a good online presence (website, YouTube videos, newsletter etc.). In the same time, a church that wants to reach all types of potential visitors will use internal communication to keep in touch with its parishioners and pilgrims, will use local advertisement to invite excursionists and collaboration with touristic agencies and websites to bring tourists.

The cultural product is more complex than one would think, and every element counts in order to create value. This paradigm offers a new holistic approach to the Religious Heritage product, being a mix of tangible and intangible, transmitting ideas, being adopted to a certain level by the consumer, transforming him through education, and having as finality a certain level of satisfaction. To build a successful cultural product, and more specifically a Religious Heritage product, a strategic and systemic marketing approach is needed, involving many organizations – national and regional institutions, cultural organizations, private per-profit or non-profit organization - that enhance through their services the perceived value of the product and the visitor's satisfaction.

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