

# The role of religious identity in tourism consumption patterns



**IRIMIÁS, Anna** PhD. – Kodolányi University of Applied Sciences, Hungary  
**MICHALKÓ, Gábor** Prof. – Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary  
**MITEV, Ariel** PhD. – Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary

The research was supported by OTKA K 100953

# Aim of the research

- To investigate the **tourism behaviour** and consumption patterns of tourists at religious events and in pilgrimages.
- To analyze whether the participation at religious feasts, events and in pilgrimages influences the tourists' **perception of their health and well-being**



# Theoretical background



- *Religious tourism* → connected with holiday and **cultural** tourism (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Timothy & Olsen, 2006) + strong affinity with **social and group tourism + political** aspects (Jakowski & Smith, 1992; Rinschede, 1992; Vukonić, 1992)
- Visitor experience (Choe et al. 2013; Poria et al. 2003; Scaffidi Abbate & Di Nuovo, 2013)
- **Hope** → alleviates pain => improves health and well-being
- Pilgrimage landscape / therapeutic landscape → healing effects (Foley, 2011; Gesler, 1996)
- Healing power of **rites**



# Research Methods



- Structured questionnaire implemented with face to face interviews
- The pilot survey → June 2012; the main data collection between March and May 2013
- Measurement of travel frequencies, consumption attitude, visitation patterns at a specific religious event/feast/pilgrimage and demographic profile
- Self-developed items (11 items)
- Convenience sample → **345 respondents**
- Structured interview on perceived physical and psychological benefits and effects on well-being

# Findings – demographic profile

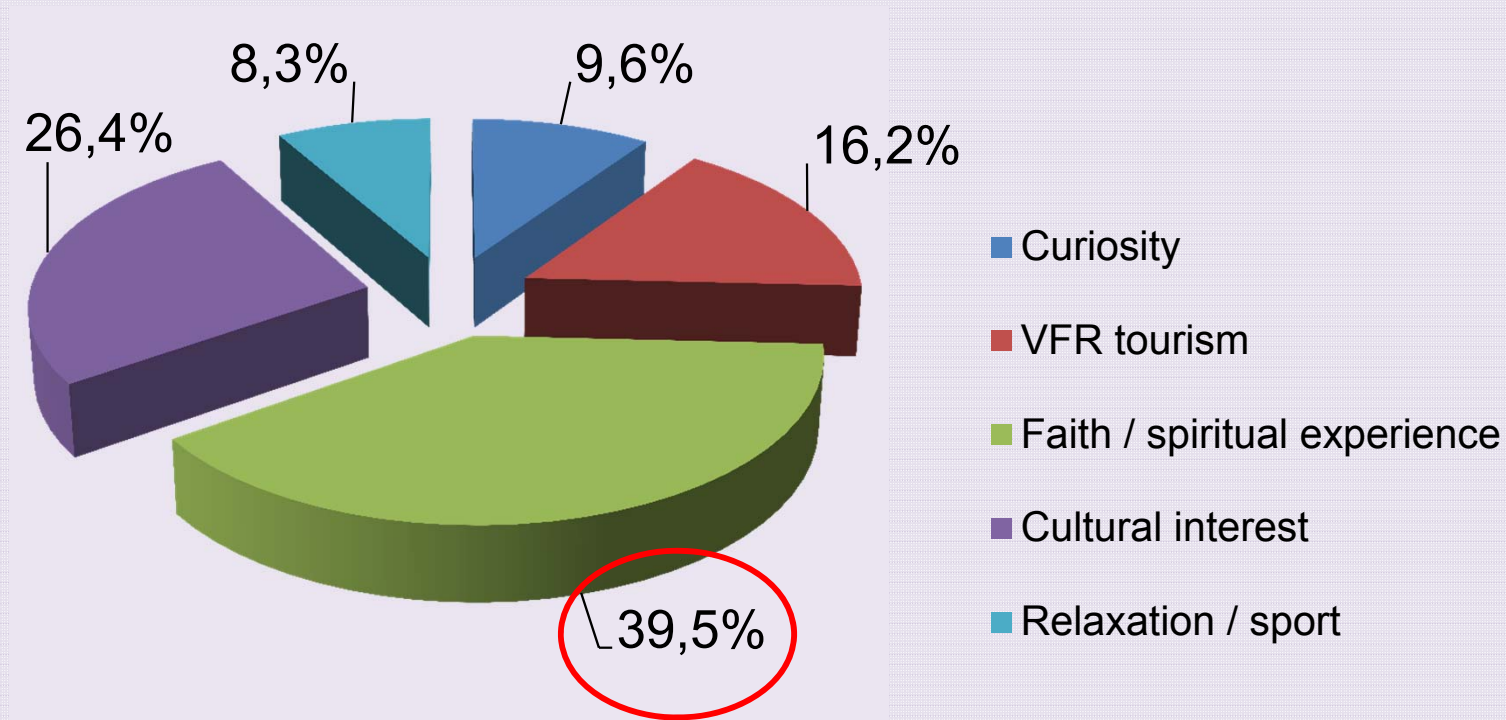
Demographic characteristics	Frequency (N=345)	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	137	39.7
Female	203	58.8
Missing data	5	1.4
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18-24	79	22.9
25-39	92	26.7
40-59	99	28.7
60<	72	20.9
Missing data	3	0.9
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	125	36.1
Married	117	33.9
In relationship	44	12.8
Divorced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

Source: the authors' own research, 2013.

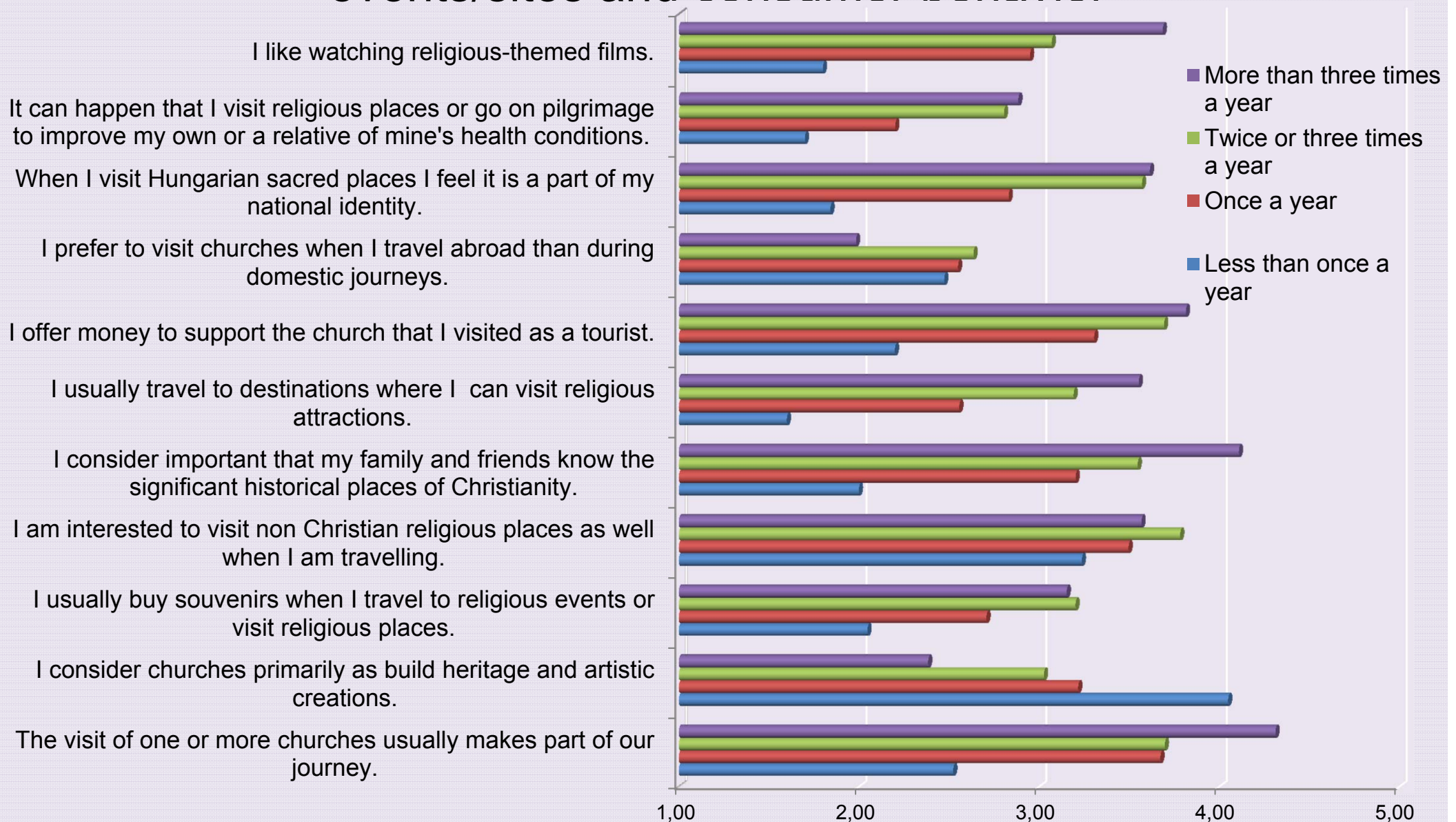
Demographic characteristics related to religion	Frequency (N=345)	Percentage
<b>Grown up in a religious family</b>		
Yes	271	78.6
No	58	16.8
No response	16	4.6
<b>Considers him/herself a believer</b>		
Yes	269	78.0
No	37	10.7
No response	39	11.3
<b>Belongs to a religious community</b>		
Congregation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

Source: the authors' own research, 2013.

# Motivation to visit religious sites and events

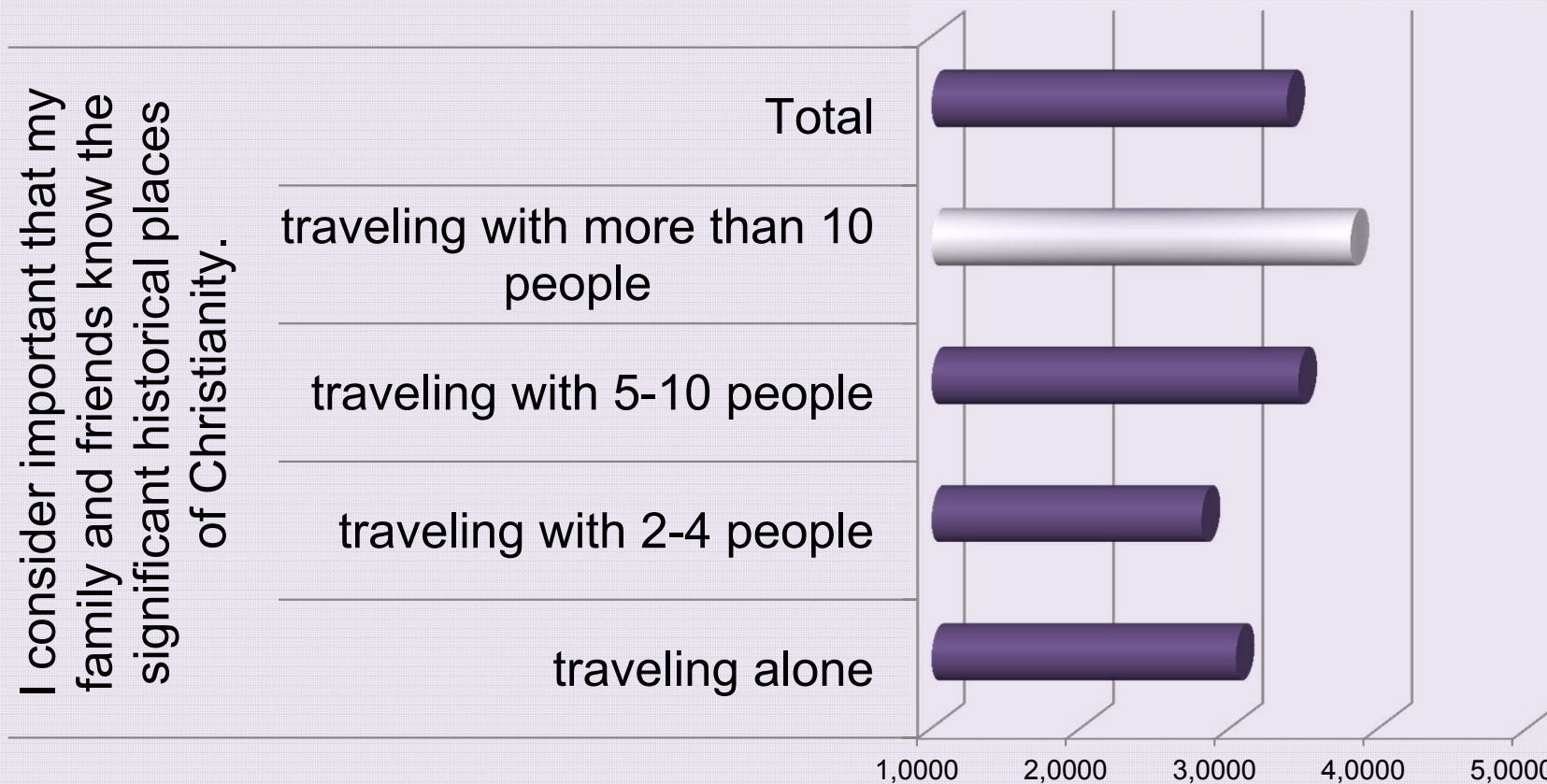


# Comparison of the travelling frequency to religious events/sites and consumer behavior



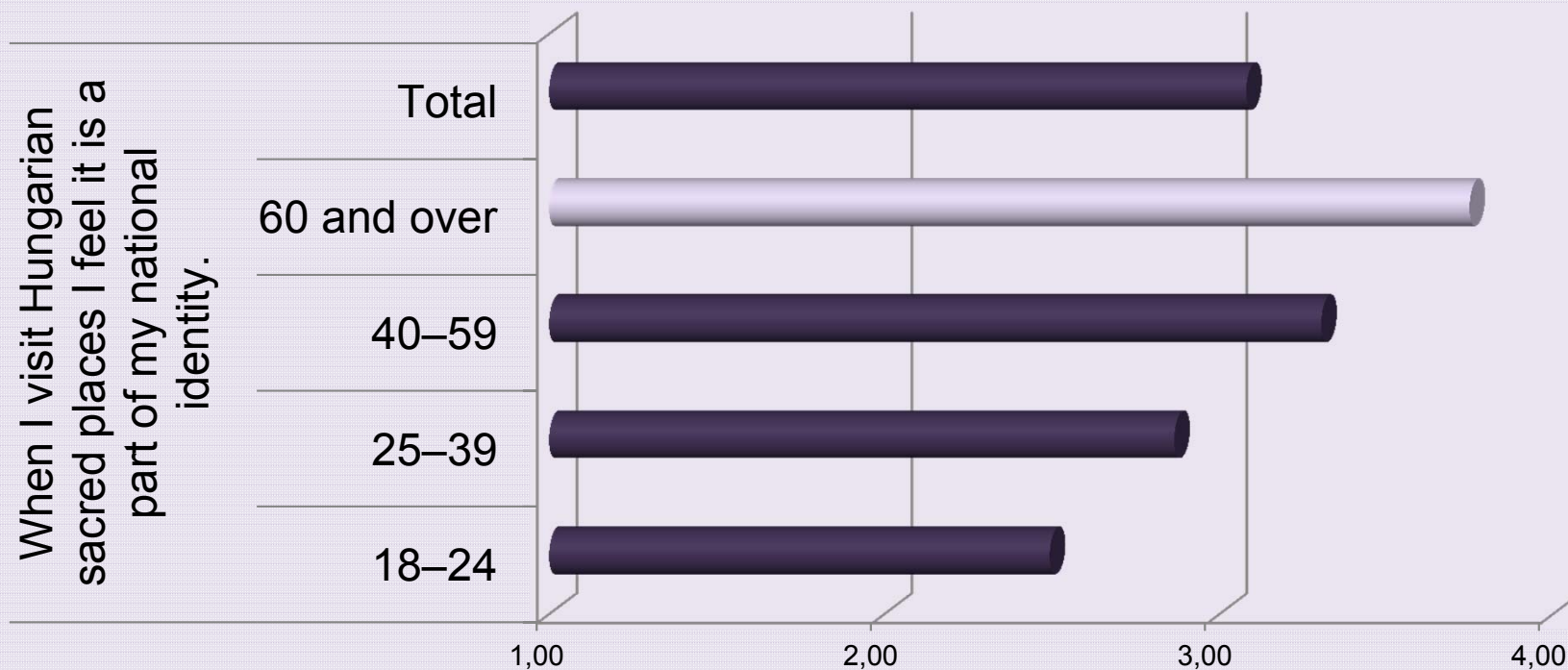
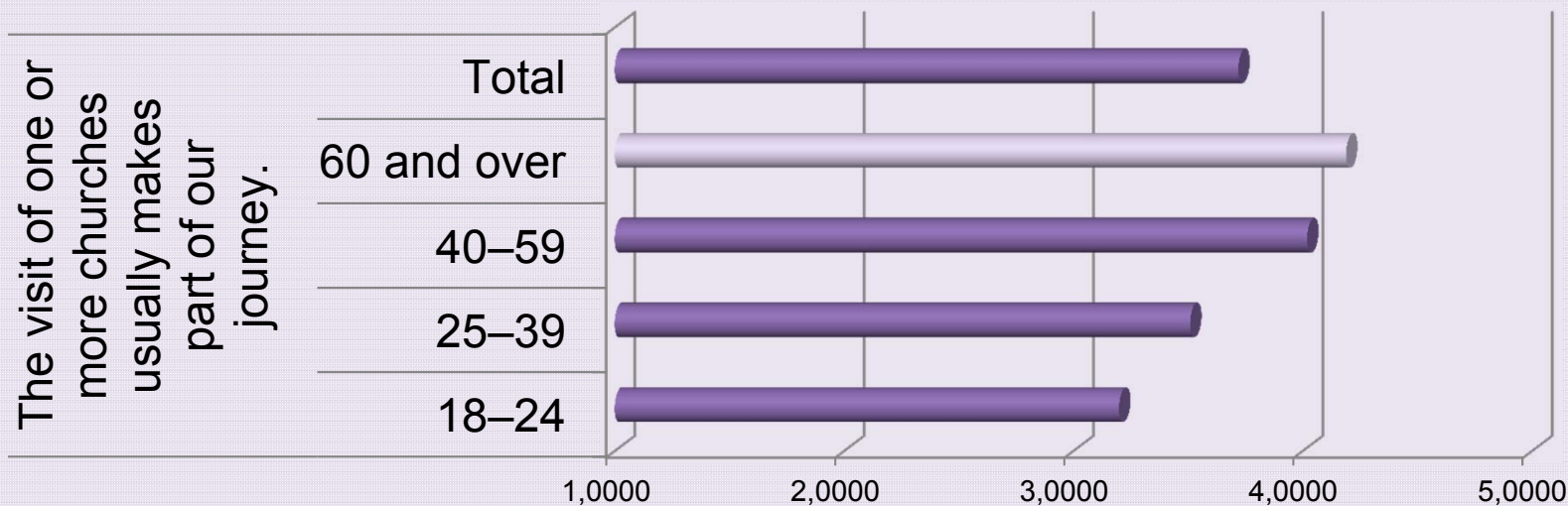


# Comparison between traveling in company and the attributed significance to Christian sites



Source: questionnaire survey, 2013 (N=345)

# Findings related to **senior travelers** on religious journeys



# Aging particularities related to one specific journey

Variable	18–24 (n=79) Group a	25–39 (n=92) Group b	40–59 (n=99) Group c	60 and over (n=72) Group d	p-value	Identified differences between groups
Buying souvenirs (/ all spending)	11,5%	13,7%	14,3%	23,1%	,015	ad

Accomodation (N=213)	18–24 (n=79) Group a	25–39 (n=92) Group b	40–59 (n=99) Group c	60 and over (n=72) Group d	p-value	Identified differences between groups
Hotel	2,0%	7,9%	10,3%	21,6%	<b>0,011</b>	<b>ad</b>
B&B	5,9%	12,7%	27,9%	9,8%	<b>0,004</b>	<b>ac</b>

Variable	18–24 (n=79) Group a	25–39 (n=92) Group b	40–59 (n=99) Group c	60 and over (n=72) Group d	p-value	Identified differences between groups
Company from congregation	<b>5,3%</b>	<b>12,2%</b>	<b>6,7%</b>	<b>27,9%</b>	<b>0,003</b>	<b>ad, cd</b>

# Rituals – as a framework to understand religious experiences

Dimension	Rook (1985) The Tangible Components of Rituals	What Rituals Determine	Driver (1991)'s social gifts
<b>Essence of the ritual</b>			<b>Transformation</b>
With what?	Ritual artefacts		
On the basis of what?	Ritual scripts (rules)	→	Order
Who?	Ritual roles (roles of the individual)	→ →	Society / community
With whom?	Ritual audience		

# Religious tourism experience: the healing effects of rituals

- **Trasformation:**

- *“I felt myself purified and returned home as **a different person**. I saw so many sick people coming to Lourdes as their last chance. They got better although they were about to die. **The power of faith influenced everyone**, everyone in our company.” (male, 40-59)*
- *“The most important that I felt myself closer to God. **I felt myself free and calm** for a long time after that experience. I reconsidered my personal relationships. It became clear what I had to improve to become more balanced.” (female, 40-59)*

- **Ritual artefacts:**

- *“Szentkut is an ideal place for an excursion because it is located in the forest and there is a **holy spring** as well.” (female, 25-39)*
- *“The experience at Csiksomlyo had a great influence on me. Especially that moment when the people passed by an **old statue** and they touched it.” (female, 25-39)*

# Religious tourism experience: the healing effects of rituals

- **Nostalgia:**
- *“It was good to walk again on the old roads, to search for the rests where our family and relatives were living. I was overwhelmed by **memories and old stories**. It was sad and I got anxious standing in front of my family’s grave. **Remembering** them brought peace to my soul.”(female, 40-59)*
- **Society, community:**
- *“In the pilgrimage I perceived the **changes in my fellows’ behaviour**. My over-stressed friend was finally relaxed, and my always irritated teachers were smiling! After the **common prayers we had deep conversations**.”*
- *“It was an incredible experience to visit a place where you get reloaded with. **people who think like you and have the same values** as yours. Since we are rather similar, from the beginning of the journey **the atmosphere was human, familiar**. It is such a good feeling to sit in a church anywhere in the world and when someone starts to sing a Maria-song, in Hungarian, others participate in singing together. I cannot describe with words what I felt. It is also true that to experience it, you have to believe. “*

# Conclusions

- Physical and psychical benefits are evident
- Aging differences are significant → *how could the youth be more motivated to participate at such events?*
- The management of sacred sites and pilgrimage routes should focus on the importance of rituals
- **Future research aim:** *to develop a scale to measure consumer behaviour at religious sites.*

# References

- Collins-Kreiner, N. (2010). Researching Pilgrimage. Continuity and transformations. *Annals of Tourism Research* 37(2), 440-456.
- Digance, J. (2003). Pilgrimage at contested sites. *Annals of Tourism Research* 30(1), 143-159.
- Foley, R. (2011). Performing health in place: The holy well as a therapeutic assemblage. *Health & Place*, 17, 470-479.
- Gesler, W. (1996). Lourdes: healing in a place of pilgrimage. *Health & Place* 2(2), 9-105.
- Hall, M.C. (2006). Travel and Journeying on the Sea of Faith: Perspectives from Religious Humanism. In: Timothy, D.J. and Olsen, D.H. (eds.) *Tourism, religion and spiritual journeys*.
- Hughes, K., Bond, N. & Ballantyne, R. (2013). Designing and managing interpretative experiences at religious sites: Visitor' perceptions of Canterbury Cathedral. *Tourism Management* 36, 210-220.
- Irimias, A.& Michalko, G. (2013). Religious tourism in Hungary – an integrative framework. *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 62(2), 175-196.
- Kocsis, K. (2009) Changing religious structure of the population and the secularization in the Carpatho-Pannonian area during the 20th century. *Acta Universitatis Carolinae. Geographica*. 44(1-2) 83-102.
- Kocsis K. (2006) Spatial and temporal changes in the relationship between church and state in Hungary. *GeoJournal*. 67 (4), 357-371.
- Murray, M. & Graham, B. (1997) Exploring dialectics of route-based tourism: the *Camino de Santiago*. *Tourism Management*, 18(8), 513-524.
- Nolan, M. L., & Nolan, S. (1992). Religious sites as tourism attractions in Europe. *Annals of Tourism Research* 19, 68–78.
- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: the hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11(4), 327-344.
- Poria, Y., Butler, R. & Airey, D. (2003). Tourism, Religion and Religiosity: A Holy Mess. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 6(4), 340-363.
- Shinde, K. (2007). Pilgrimage and the Environment: Challenges in a Pilgrimage Centre. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10(4), 343-365.
- Willson, G.B.; McIntosh, A.J. & Zahara, A.L. (2013). Tourism and spirituality: A phenomenological analysis. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 42, 150-168.



Thank you for your kind attention.



[annairimias@hotmail.com](mailto:annairimias@hotmail.com)