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TOURIST VALORIZATION OF ACTIVE MONASTERIES IN R.N. MACEDONIA

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Abstract

Macedonia is a biblical country and a crossroads of many religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, etc.). The northern part of Macedonia¹ is a good example of a republic with a multi-confessional space that has exhibition monasteries for religious tourism. In the article, using literature and empirical research, all 40 active monasteries are processed and evaluated. Active monasteries are those in which there is constant monasticism - male or female. The aim of the paper is through value analysis to see the role of active monasteries in the development of religious tourism in RN Macedonia. For better visibility, the evaluation of active monasteries is grouped by planning regions and the country as a whole. In valorization we use six sets of parameters for all eight planning regions equally. In addition to the text, several tables and a thematic map have been moved. Finally, the conclusion presents recommendations for comprehensive institutional planning and practice of monastery tourism, as a major part of Macedonian religious tourism.

Key words: analysis, parameters, planning regions, monastery tourism, religious tourism

JEL Classification: Z32 Tourism and Development; Z39 Tourism: Other

Introduction

Beliefs are as old as man. On the territory of RS Macedonia there are sanctuaries and places of worship from prehistory, ancient and medieval, to the present day. It is estimated that on the territory of the country there are over 4000 different holy places, ancient temples, early Christian basilicas, medieval temples, religious buildings built in the last few centuries and religious temples and other buildings built in modern times.

Detailed research on religious buildings and their role in the development of religious tourism in the country has not been conducted. Only in 2011 a Map of religious buildings in the Republic of Macedonia was prepared (Pavlovska, et al., 2011). Thus, according to the map, in 2011 2468 religious buildings were registered, of which 1842 Orthodox, 580 Muslim and 46 other religious buildings. There are no more recent published data on religious buildings.

Starting from the previous and motivated by research motives, we researched the total number of religious buildings. In the research we also use data from the websites of the Macedonian Orthodox Church - Archdiocese of Ohrid (MOC - AO) and its dioceses, then data from the IRC, data from the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Groups (CRRCG), data obtained from the Internet. (<http://www.mpc.org.mk/MPC/eparhii.asp> ; <https://mk.wikipedia.org/wiki/> ; <https://www.kovz.gov.mk/> ; <http://www.qragjanskisvet.org.mk/> downloaded from 07.12. until 18.12.2021)

¹ Additions to the name Macedonia in the last eight decades (1944-2019): Democratic Federal Republic of Macedonia, DFRM (1944-1946); People's Republic of Macedonia, PRM (1946-1963); Socialist Republic of Macedonia, SRM (1963-1991); Republic of Macedonia, RM (1991-2019), recognized by 133 countries worldwide; application to the UN with temporary reference Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM (1993-2019); Republic of Northern Macedonia, RNM (2019-). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Macedonia retrieved on 08.12.2021

The research obtained the following data: in RS Macedonia, in 2021 there are 2870 religious buildings, of which 2100 Orthodox (churches, monasteries, chapels), 700 Muslim (mosques, tekkes) and 70 other religious buildings (Catholic churches, monasteries, other churches, synagogues and buildings of religious groups).

We emphasize that the purpose of this paper is only 40 active monasteries, and we will talk about other types of buildings and their characteristics in the next opportunity.

Material and methods

The materials used in the research are the aforementioned literature and web pages. However, to achieve the goal, tourist valorization of the active monasteries, we use the method of field research, telephone call and personal survey with monks, nuns and other clergy (conducted in the summer months of 2020 and 2021), from which are obtained valuable data on monastic potentials for tourism development.

From this research, a small part of the monasteries with lodgings was published, and only for the municipality of Bitola. (Dimitrov, 2021). In this research paper, generalized evaluations of 40 active monasteries with male monasticism (21 monastery) and female monasticism (19 monastery) will be presented. The number of monks in the mentioned monasteries is variable, so the number of monks / nuns in the monasteries ranges from 230-250. Minimum number of monks in monasteries ranges from 2 to a maximum of 30 (Bigorski monastery). The number of monasticism proportionally affects the realization of the six groups of potentials listed below. That is, the more monasticism, the greater the possibilities for maximum realization of the mentioned groups of potentials. That is, the more monasticism, the greater the possibilities for maximum realization of the mentioned groups of potentials. The main tool for data collection is the 29-item survey questionnaire - individual potentials. The questions are grouped into 6 groups of potentials. The question form is simple with the possibility of evaluation, on a scale of five numerical points or grades from 1 to 5 (1 insufficient, 2 sufficient, 3 good, 4 very good, 5 excellent). (See: Table 1).

Table 1. Group of potentials and excerpt of the questions in the survey questionnaire

SN	Group of potentials	Individual potentials, their number and the questions in the survey questionnaire
1.	Access and infrastructure	Access road, parking, electricity, water, toilet. (5 potentials - 5 questions) -Evaluate the access road to the monastery, with points 1-5 -Evaluate the parking lot of the monastery, with points 1-5 -Evaluate the electricity supply in the monastery, with points 1-5 -Evaluate the water supply in the monastery, with points 1-5 -Evaluate the toilet in the monastery, with points from 1 to 5
2.	Accommodation and catering	Accommodation facilities for tourists / visitors (konaci, etc.) and catering (dining room, kitchen, restaurant). (4 potentials - 4 questions) -Evaluate visitor lodgings, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the dining room for visitors, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the kitchen for visitors, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the restaurant for visitors, with points from 1 to 5
3.	Cultural and recreational offer	Additional cultural offer (gallery, memorial room, exhibition, music event - concert, etc., art colony), additional recreational offer (hiking trails, children's corner, workshops, small zoo). The offers in the monastery are valued. (9 potentials - 9 questions)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evaluate the gallery in the monastery, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the memorial room, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the exhibition exhibits, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the music event - concert, etc., with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the art colony, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the pedestrian path, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the children's corner, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the workshop, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the small zoo, with points from 1 to 5
4.	Communication with the public	Website and social media. (2 potentials - 2 questions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evaluate the website of the monastery, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the social network of the monastery, with points 1 - 5
5.	Economy and production	Production of organic food and domestic production, monastic handicrafts, breeding of domestic animals and / or bees and publishing. Economy and production for own needs, and crafts, publishing for sale (6 potentials - 6 questions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rate food production on a scale of 1 to 5 -Evaluate domestic production, with scores from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the production of monastery handicrafts, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the domestic production of domestic animals, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the domestic production of bees and honey, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the publication of books, brochures, etc. on a scale of 1 to 5
6.	Current conditions of the monastery	Holding over 1 mass gathering of citizens, condition of the konaci, rooms, premises and monastery property. (3 potentials - 3 questions)-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assess the situation with the konaci, the rooms, with points from 1 to 5 -Evaluate the mass gathering in the monastery, with points 1-5 -Evaluate the property of the monastery, with points from 1 to 5
To-tal.	6 groups of potentials	A total of 29 questions of individual potentials

Results and discussion

The results of the research are placed in three tables and one thematic map. Namely, Tables 2 and 3 evaluate the 6 group potentials of all 40 active monasteries and summarized by planning regions. Thus, monasteries with the highest values of over 4 points are only two monasteries: Bigorski Monastery - St. John the Baptist (male monastery) in the Polog region, with 4.6 points and the Monastery "St. Archangels "or monastery" St. Naum Ohridski "(male monastery), in the Southwest region, with 4.3 points. The high amount of value points is due to the solid potentials for access, infrastructure, accommodation and catering for visitors, communication with the public, the current state of the monastery, cultural and recreational offer and economy and production and for visitors.

Monasteries with a value of 3 and over 3 points, are 9 monasteries (Monastery of St. Gavril Lesnovski - Lesnovski Monastery (male monastery) with 3.7 points; Monastery "St. John the Baptist" - Slepchanski Monastery (female monastery) with 3.6 points; Monastery "St. Joachim Osogovski" - Osogovo Monastery (male monastery) with 3.4; Monastery "St. Demetrius" -

Markov Monastery (female monastery) with 3.3; Monastery "Assumption of the Most Holy Mother of God" - Matka Monastery (female monastery) with 3.3; Stavropigial Monastery "Nativity of the Virgin" - Kalishta (male monastery) with 3.2; Monastery "Introduction to the Virgin" - Monastery Prechista (female monastery) with 3.1; Monastery "Holy Transfiguration" - Monastery Zrze Monastery of St. Athanasius the Great - Leshok Monastery (male monastery) with 3.1 value point Southwest region has 3 monasteries with over 3 value points, Skopje and Pelagonija regions have 2 monasteries with over 3 value points, etc.

More than half of the active monasteries (27 monasteries or 67.5%) have potentials of 2 and over 2 value points. The eastern region has the largest number of active monasteries with potential values of 2 and over 2 points, namely 7 monasteries, followed by the southeastern 6, Pelagonija 5 monasteries, etc. Only two active monasteries have the least value points above 1, which means that significantly more should be invested in them.

Table 2. Evaluation of the potentials of 40 active monasteries in 8 planning regions

N u m b e r	Monasteries after planning regions	Group of potentials						
		Access and infrastructure	Accommodation and catering	Cultural and recreational offer	Communication with the public	Economy and production	Current conditions of the monastery	Average in index points
1	Monastery "Nativity of the Mother of God" - village Sogle (female monastery)	5	3	1	1	3	3,5	2,7
2	Polog Monastery "Saint George the Great Martyr" (female monastery)	4,0	2,5	2,0	1,0	3,2	3,5	2,7
To.	Vardar planning region (average)	4,5	2,7	1,5	1,0	3,1	3,5	2,7
1	Monastery of St. Gavri Lesnovski - Lesnovski monastery (male monastery)	4,3	4	3	2	4,7	4,5	3,7
2	Monastery "East Friday - Balaklija" - Delchevo (male monastery)	4,6	2,5	2	1	1	3	2,3
3	Berovo Monastery "Assumption of the Mother of God" (male monastery)	4	1	1,5	2	3	3	2,4
4	Stavropegial Monastery "St. Gabriel the Great" - Berovo (male monastery)	2,3	2,5	2	1	2,5	3	2,2
5	Monastery "St. Spiridon" - Zletovo (female monastery)	4,3	1	1,5	1	1,5	4,5	2,3
6	Monastery "St. Panteleimon" - Kocani (female monastery)	3,6	2	1,5	1	1,7	3,5	2,2
7	Berovo Monastery "St. Archangel Michael" (female monastery)	4,3	1	1,5	1	3	3,5	2,4

To.	East planning region (average)	3,9	2,0	1,8	1,3	2,5	3,5	2,5
1	Stavropigial Monastery "Nativity of the Mother of God" - Kalishta (male monastery)	5	3	4	1	2	4,5	3,2
2	Monastery of St. Archangels or monastery "St. Naum Ohridski" - (male monastery)	5	5	4,5	4	2,2	5	4,3
3	Monastery "Bogorodica Perivlepta" (male monastery)	4,3	1	3	1	1	3,5	2,3
4	Monastery "Nativity of the Mother of God" - v. Monastery (male monastery)	4,3	1,5	2	1	1,2	4	2,3
5	Monastery "Si Sveti" - v. Leshani (male monastery)	4,3	1	1,5	1	1,2	3	2
6	Raichki Monastery - St. VMЧ. Georgia the Victorious (female nunnery)	4	1	2,5	2,5	3,2	5	3
7	Monastery "St. George" - v. Knezino (female monastery)	4,6	1	2	2	1,2	3,5	2,4
8	Monastery "Introduction of the Mother of God - Pure" - Dolenci Monastery - Kicevo (female monastery)	4,6	2	2	2	3,5	4,5	3,1
To.	Southwest planning region (average)	4,5	1,9	2,7	1,8	1,9	4,1	2,8
1	Monastery "Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebastia" - v. Bansko (male monastery)	4,3	1	2,5	1	2,5	3	2,4
2	Monastery "St. Anthony and George" - v. Novo Selo (male monastery)	4	1,5	2,5	1	2,7	3	2,4
3	Veljushki Monastery "Introduction to the Mother of God" - v. Veljusa (female monastery)	3,6	2	3	1	3,7	4	2,9
4	Monastery "St. Leontius" - v. Vodoca (female monastery)	4,3	2	2,5	1	3	4	2,8
5	Monastery "St. Clement and Nahum of Ohrid" - v. Hamzali (female monastery)	4	1	1,5	1	2	2,5	2,0
6	Monastery complex "Parthenius Zografski" - Dojran (female monastery)	4,6	1	2,5	1	1,2	2,5	2,1
To.	Southeast Planning Region (average)	4,1	1,4	2,4	1,0	2,5	3,1	2,4
1	Monastery "Holy Transfiguration" - v. Zrze (male monastery)	5	1	2	3	4,2	3,5	3,1
2	Monastery "Assumption of the Most Holy Mother of God" - Treskavec (male monastery)	4,3	2,5	2	2,5	1	4	2,7
3	Monastery "St. Nicholas" - v. Monastery (male monastery)	3	1	1,5	2	2,7	3	2,2
4	Monastery "St. Peter" - v. Crneec (male monastery)	3	1	1,5	1,5	1,5	3	1,9
5	Monastery "Assumption of the Most Holy Mother of God" - v. Jankovec (male monastery)	4,3	1,5	1,5	2	1,7	3	2,3
6	Monastery "St. Archangel Michael" - Varos (female monastery)	4,6	1,5	1,5	1	2	4	2,4

7	Monastery "St. John the Baptist" - v. Slepche (female monastery)	4,3	2	3	4	4,7	3,5	3,6
8	Monastery "St. Athanasius the Great" - v. Zurche (female monastery)	4,3	2	1,5	1	4,2	3	2,6
To.	Pelagonija planning region (average)	4,1	1,5	1,8	2,1	2,8	3,3	2,6
1	Lesok Monastery St. Athanasius the Great (male monastery)	5	4,5	3	1,5	1	4	3,1
2	Bigorski monastery St. John the Baptist (male monastery)	4,6	5	3,5	5	4,7	5	4,6
To.	Polog planning region (average)	4,8	4,7	3,2	3,2	2,8	4,5	3,8
1	Monastery "St. Joachim Osogovski" - Kriva Palanka (male monastery)	5	4,5	2	2	2	5	3,4
2	Monastery "St. George" - v. Biljanovce (male monastery)	4	1	1	1	1	2,5	1,7
To.	Northeast planning region (average)	4,5	2,7	1,5	1,5	1,5	3,7	2,5
1	Nereshki Monastery "St. Martyr. Panteleimon" (male monastery)	5	1	2	1	1,5	3	2,2
2	Markov Monastery "St. Demetrius" - v. Markova Sushica (female monastery)	4	1,5	2,5	3,5	4,2	4	3,3
3	Monastery "Assumption of the Most Holy Mother of God" - Matka (female monastery)	4	2,5	3,5	2	4,2	3,5	3,3
4	Monastery "St. Nicholas" - v. Ljubanci (female monastery)	4	1	1,5	1	2,2	2,5	2,0
5	Monastery "Holy Archangels" - v. Kucevishte (female monastery)	2,6	1,5	1,5	1	2,5	3	2,0
To.	Skopje planning region (average)	3,9	1,5	2,2	1,7	2,9	3,2	2,5
40	TOTAL (average)	4,3	2,3	2,1	1,7	2,5	3,6	2,7

Table 3. Number of monasteries with value points by planning regions

Planning region	Number of monasteries with value points			
	Over 1 point	2 and over 2 points	3 and over 3 points	4 and over 4 points
Vardar (2)	0	2	0	0
East (7)	0	7	0	0
Southwest (8)	0	4	3	1
Southeast (6)	0	6	0	0
Pelagonija (8)	1	5	2	0
Polog (2)	0	0	1	1
Northeast (2)	1	0	1	0
Skopje (5)	0	3	2	0
Total (40)	2	27	9	2

From the analysis of the data for a group of potentials for tourist evaluation of the planning regions, in Table 4, we can comment on the following.

The group of potentials - access and infrastructure has the highest average value of 4.3 points. Of the regions, the highest value is in the Polog region with a high 4.8 points, and the lowest in the eastern and Skopje regions with 3.9 points. The other five regions have values of 4.5 and 4.1 points. These data give us information that almost all active monasteries have access and some infrastructure.

The group of potentials - accommodation and catering has an average value of 2.3 points, of which the highest value has the Polog region with high 4.7 points, followed by Vardar and Northeast region with 2.7 points, and the smallest southeast region with 1.4 points. In the other four regions, the average values range from 1.5 to 2.0 points.

These data speak of "free space" for the construction of accommodation facilities and catering facilities in the monasteries or in their immediate vicinity, in order to promote religious tourism or more specifically, the development of monastic tourism.

The group of potentials - cultural and recreational offer has an average value of 2.1 points, of which the highest value has the Polog region with 3.2 points, followed by the southwest region with 2.7 points, and the lowest value have the Vardar and northeast region with 1, 5 points. In the other five regions, the average values range from 1.8 to 2.4 points. This group of potentials has opportunities to enrich with new content that will be a motive plus for the development of religious-monastery tourism.

The group of potentials - cultural and recreational offer has an average value of 2.1 points, of which the highest value has the Polog region with 3.2 points, followed by the southwest region with 2.7 points, and the lowest value have the Vardar and northeast region with 1, 5 points. In the other five regions, the average values range from 1.8 to 2.4 points. This group of potentials has opportunities to enrich with new content that will be a motive plus for the development of religious-monastery tourism.

The group of potentials - communication with the public has an average value of 1.7 points, of which the highest value has the Polog region with 3.2 points, followed by the Pelagonija region with 2.1 points, and the lowest value has the Vardar and southeast region with only 1, 0 points. In the other four regions, the average values range from 1.3 to 1.8 points. These data show that almost all regions have poor communication with the public. This is a result of poor communication of the monastic monasteries with the public - tourists / visitors. This group of potentials will have to work harder if the active monasteries want to develop religious tourism. The group of potentials - economy and production has an average value of 2.5 points, of which the highest value has the Vardar region with high 3.1 points, followed by the Skopje region with 2.9 points, and the lowest value has the northeastern region with 1.5 points. In the other five regions, the average values range from 1.9 to 2.8 points. In this group of potentials, too, there is sufficient space for the advancement of the economy and production. These potentials are conditioned by the number of monks / nuns, but also by the weak economic cooperation with the local population and joint production, which directly affect the development of religious and rural tourism.

The group of potentials - current conditions of the monastery has an average value of 3.6 points, of which the highest value has the Polog region with a high 4.5 points, followed by the southwestern region with 4.1 points, and the lowest southeastern region with 3.1 points. In the other five regions, the average values range from 3.2 to 3.7 points. This group of potentials is present in all active monasteries with a tendency to increase with contents in the direction of actualization of the monasteries.

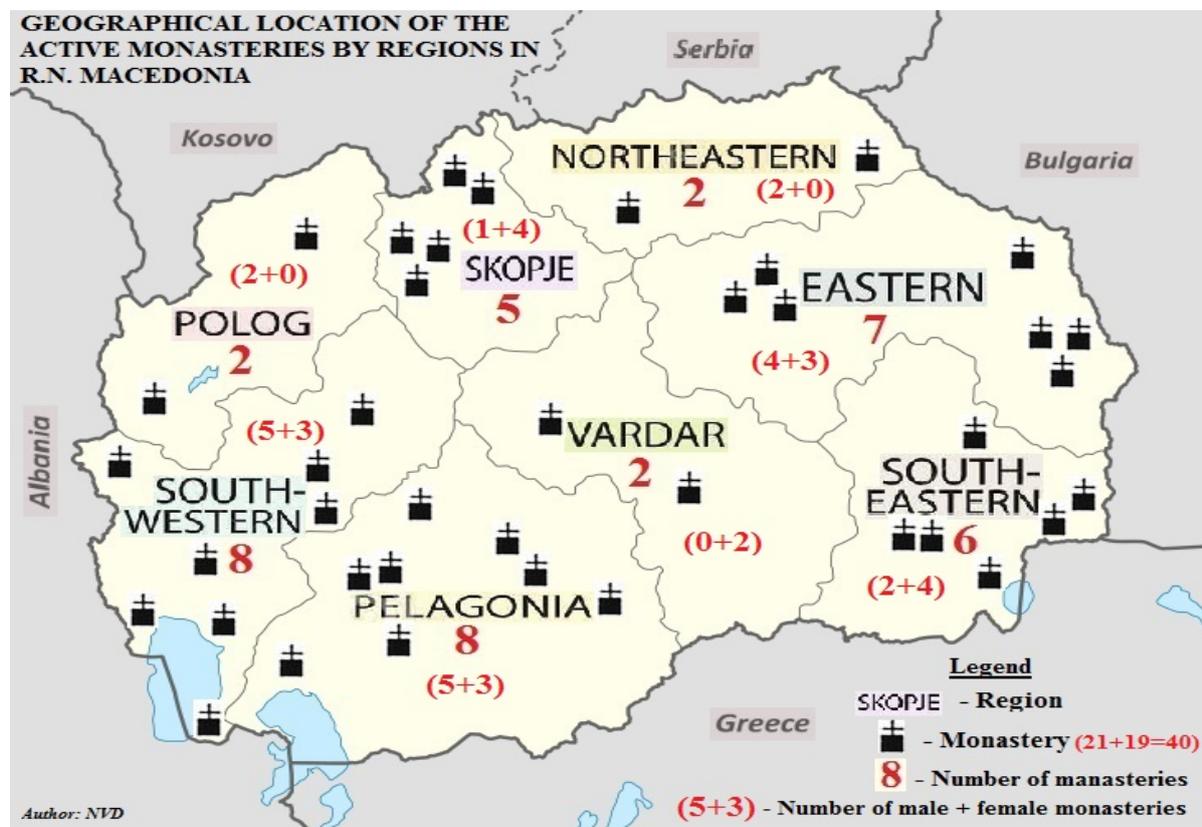
The total average in index points as a whole for all regions is 2.7, which indicates a free space for tourism development in the country as a whole. In this aggregate average, the highest numerical values have the Polog region with 3.8 points, then the southwestern region with 2.8 points, Vardar region with 2.7 points, Pelagonija region with 2.6 points, three regions - east, northeast and Skopje have value of 2.5 points, and the southeastern region has the lowest numerical values of 2.4 points.

Summarized from Table 4, according to the group of potentials, all planning regions have enough space to promote religious, ie monastery tourism.

Tables 4. Group of potentials for tourist evaluation of the planning regions

Group of potentials	PLANNING REGIONS (number of active monasteries) Value of numerical points								
	Vardar planning region (2)	East Planning Region (7)	Southwest Planning Region (8)	Southeast Planning Region (6)	Pelagonia planning region (8)	Polog planning region (2)	Northeast Planning Region (2)	Skopje planning region (5)	Average
Access and infrastructure	4,5	3,9	4,5	4,1	4,1	4,8	4,5	3,9	4,3
Accommodation and catering	2,7	2,0	1,9	1,4	1,5	4,7	2,7	1,5	2,3
Cultural and recreational offer	1,5	1,8	2,7	2,4	1,8	3,2	1,5	2,2	2,1
Communication with the public	1,0	1,3	1,8	1,0	2,1	3,2	1,5	1,7	1,7
Economy and production	3,1	2,5	1,9	2,5	2,8	2,8	1,5	2,9	2,5
Current conditions of the monastery	3,5	3,5	4,1	3,1	3,3	4,5	3,7	3,2	3,6
Average in index points	2,7	2,5	2,8	2,4	2,6	3,8	2,5	2,5	2,7

For a better geographical overview, the location of the active monasteries by planning regions are shown in Figures 1.



Figures 1. Geographical location of the active monasteries by regions in RN Macedonia

Conclusion

From the above we can draw a conclusion in which there are recommendations. From the research for tourist valorization of the 40 active monasteries in function of the religious tourism in RS. Macedonia, we single out the following.

- In all regions there are active monasteries with monasticism, but with an insufficient number of monks / nuns;
- Practicing religious - monastic tourism in most of the monasteries requires construction of new lodgings, or adaptation of the existing lodgings with rooms with complete infrastructure for tourists / visitors;
- For the promotion of the monastery tourism, new contents are needed, continuous promotion, communication with the public, investing in a profitable and sustainable economy of the monasteries;
- It is recommended that monasticism acquire basic education for practicing monastic or religious tourism;
- In the development of the monastery - religious tourism should play a significant role relevant institutions (religious, educational, cultural, economic, tourist, etc.), communication with the local population (rural, urban) and the establishment of mutual partnership and cooperation (monastery - local community, etc.);
- The potentials for religious tourism are great, but they are not used enough, so we recommend the development of a Strategy for the development of monastery tourism.

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