

7th icCSBs 2018
**The Annual International Conference on Cognitive - Social,
and Behavioural Sciences**

**PILGRIMAGE CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN OF NEPOMUK
WITHIN RELIGIOUS TOURISM**

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Abstract

This case study deals with religious tourism in the context of the pilgrimage church of Saint John of Nepomuk at Zelená hora where spiritual and secular worlds blend. Two questions were stated: Are there any ways to improve promotion of the Pilgrimage Church and bring more pilgrims to the site? and Is modern-day society still interested in pilgrimage in general? The goal of the paper is to characterize the religious tourism in connection with the pilgrimage church of St. John of Nepomuk and propose marketing procedures in terms of religious tourism to popularize pilgrimage trips to this site. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied; specifically an on-line questionnaire survey, hard-copy questionnaire survey, a semi-structured interview with the castle manager, an analysis of tourist turnout data and literature review. The questionnaire survey shows that awareness of plentiful Christian pilgrimage sites in the Czech Republic is relatively low. At the same time, however, almost half of respondents stated that they would like to participate in some pilgrimage. After returning the monument back to the Roman Catholic Church in 2014, the church's pastor expressed his intention to restore the monument as a place of pilgrimage. Site promotion is based primarily on the UNESCO World Heritage status. The survey on websites of the pilgrimage sites in the Czech Republic shows that Zelena hora isn't sufficiently presented. More pilgrims could be brought by better promotion of the place with highlighting its role as a pilgrimage site and providing better services.

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Keywords: Pilgrimage, Religious tourism, Survey, Promotion, Marketing.



1. Introduction

Religious tourism as a global phenomenon is a unique and developing sector of Tourism. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) can see potential in religious heritage and acts as a co-organizer of conferences like 'Conference on Religious Heritage and Tourism: How to increase religious heritage tourism in a changing society' (UNWTO, 2014). Beside conferences that are exclusively focused on religious tourism there are plentiful conferences on social, economic or managerial science which have incorporated this current issue into their programmes, e.g., this 'Conference on Cognitive - Social, and Behavioural Sciences' (Future Academy, 2018). It is desirable to bring together representatives of heritage institutions and representatives of the academia, as well as private sector and discuss cultural, social and economic impact of religious tourism, share practices and bring it forward.

Interest in pilgrimages in our region has been restored. Among most popular rank the European Cultural Route of St. Cyril and Methodius (Velehrad), Via Slavica, which connects Poland, the Czech Republic and Rome and Camino de Compostela. This study on the Christian Pilgrimage site in the central Europe is a modest contribution to the lively developing sector of tourism. It brings a current insight into the religious tourism on the local scene in the Czech Republic. The Pilgrimage Church of St John of Nepomuk at Zelena hora is a national cultural heritage and the UNESCO World heritage monument (UNESCO Czech Heritage, 2018 b). On one case of an outstanding heritage site called Pilgrimage Church of St John of Nepomuk at Zelena hora (on Green hill), there is revealed how history, changing perception of religion and spirituality, changing needs and expectations of not only pilgrims but all the visitors influence "life" of the site and how its management is being adapted.

2. Problem Statement

This case study deals with religious tourism in the context of the Pilgrimage Church of Saint John of Nepomuk at Zelená hora where spiritual and secular worlds blend; where spiritual power of pilgrimage mingle with currently more secular desire to travel and meet new sites and people.

2.1. Approach to the issue

Religious tourism and inhere described pilgrimage Church of Saint John of Nepomuk are approached in this study from several perspectives, including marketing one. Following vital aspects described in this study form a kind of the background to the marketing issue:

- Introduction of the Church of Saint John of Nepomuk and the Patron John of Nepomuk,
- Defining terms like pilgrimage, religion, tourism and how they are perceived in literature sources,
- Current religious scene in the Czech Republic; statistics from the National Statistical Office and statistics referring to the site visit.

Religious tourism is discussed as a promising market (Raj & Griffin, 2015), (Tomljenović, 2017). Centre for the Promotion of Imports (2016) presents religious tourism as a product with potential. Collins-Kreiner (2016) analyses the life cycle of the Pilgrimage Tourism, she describes individual stages of the life-cycle and continuous changes. In her previous work she focused on transformation of pilgrimage tourism

(Collins-Kreiner, 2010). However, as for our region, potential of religious tourism is still waiting to be revealed to the full, see more (Cabayova, 2016) or (Klimova & Belesova, 2014).

2.2. Research at the pilgrimage site

This part deals with the research at the pilgrimage site itself from the perspective of visitors and from the perspective of the site's management. Other relevant followed areas of interest are how people in our country perceive religious tourism, what the reasons or motives for visiting religious sites are. The output is a set of recommendations on the improvement of the site's marketing that is based on findings from the research.

3. Research Questions

3.1. Research Question 1

Are there any ways to improve the promotion of the Pilgrimage Church at Zelená hora and bring more pilgrims to the site?

The research brings an insight into the visits and management of the Pilgrimage Church, whether its religious mission is separated from the secular or in other words, how they coexist when the Pilgrimage Church belongs to the Roman Catholic Church Parish and is on the World Heritage List of UNESCO (UNESCO Czech Heritage, 2018b).

3.2. Research Question 2

Is modern-day society still interested in pilgrimage and religious tourism in general?

The research focuses on deeper understanding of religious tourism from the national point of view and narrowly also from the point of view of local people; how much people are interested in religious tourism and in what sectors of religious tourism they are mainly interested.

4. Purpose of the Study

The goal of the paper is to characterize the religious tourism in connection with the Pilgrimage Church of St. John of Nepomuk at Zelená hora and propose marketing procedures in terms of religious tourism to popularize pilgrimage trips to this site.

The Pilgrimage Church of St John of Nepomuk at Zelena hora is a national cultural heritage and the UNESCO World heritage monument (UNESCO Czech Heritage, 2018 a). As an entry into the study the answer to the question "*Where does the magic of the Pilgrimage site come from?*" will be adumbrated. Distinctive and unique phenomena mingle and complement in this site:

- Saint John of Nepomuk as a national beloved and revered patron of Bohemian and Moravian lands
- and mysterious baroque and neo-gothic architecture of Jan Blažej Santini-Aichel.

4.1. Saint John of Nepomuk

Martyr of the Catholic Church Saint John of Nepomuk is one of land patrons of Bohemian and Moravian people. Now Saint John of Nepomuk and his legacy can be often found not only in the Czech Republic, but also in Poland, Slovakia, Austria and Italy. We will give only one illustrating example out of many, which is a church in Poland called Church of St John of Nepomuk and the Our Lady Szkaplerzna in Frampol (Poland travel, 2018).

A conflict between church and a ruler in the 14th century is reflected in the history of Saint John of Nepomuk. John of Nepomuk was beatified 1721 by Pope Innocent XIII and canonized in 1729 by Benedict XIII (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). History and legends are not the same but together they create mystical atmosphere and enlarge human's spiritual dimension. According to the legend John of Nepomuk was tortured and finally thrown into the river because he didn't disclose secret of the Bohemian queen, he didn't break the Seal of the Confessional (Hora & Hořejš, 1995). His statue can often be seen also in the countries mentioned above, mostly on the bridges and is easily recognizable by a halo of five stars. It was hoped that the saint would be able to protect the villages and cities from disastrous floods, e.g. sculpture in Poznan in Poland (In your pocket, 2018).

4.2. The pilgrimage Church of Saint John of Nepomuk

The pilgrimage church and its architecture are closely connected with the Saint John of Nepomuk from the first impulse to the church construction, which got the phenomenal baroque architect Jan Santini Aichel, through the whole symbolic concept of the Church, which is based on the key Patron's attributes. When the earthly remains of John of Nepomuk were exhumed 1719 in the St. Vitus Cathedral, the tissue that was discovered was considered to be his tongue. Jan Santini Aichel perceived that as the divine intervention and the tongue used as one of key mystical symbols in design of the Church. (Kroupa & Sedlák, 2015). The symbol of number 'FIVE' dominates. The church is built on a five-point star ground plan symbolizing five stars on the Halo of John of Nepomuk. There are five chapels and five entrances into the church. There were Five Wounds of Christ. And the Latin word TACUI also carries number five in its five letters. More on symbolism of this site can be found in (Hora-Hořejš, 1995), (Sedlák, 1987), (Following Santini, 2015). The pilgrimage baroque church that is strongly influenced by gothics was built on the hill Zelena hora above monastery. Vaclav Vejmluva, Abbot of Cistercian Monastery in Zdar nad Sazavou ordered its construction in 1719. The church was consecrated three years later (Kroupa & Sedlák, 2015). In the 18th century, the Pilgrimage church of Saint John of Nepomuk was one of the most visited pilgrimage places and a place where a number of many splendid Baroque feasts took place.

When we look into modern history of this site, it still keeps its attractiveness as a pilgrimage site, but the church itself suffered from wrong reconstruction attempts. Enormous effort had to be made to return the architecture jewel to the original state with all its facilities and ornaments; it was one of the conditions to apply for the enlisting on the UNESCO's World Heritage List. All the effort brought success and led to the Date of Inscription in 1994 into the prestigious list. The National Heritage Institute, a specialised organization, even strengthened the supervision of all events and activities in the church. All steps concerning the repairs and reconstructions have to be documented and presented in the so-called monitoring report; these measures are applied on monuments included in the World Heritage List (UNESCO Czech

Heritage, 2018 b). Since 2014 the Pilgrimage Church of St John of Nepomuk has been again in the property of the Roman Catholic Parish of Zdar nad Sazavou (Zelená hora, 2015).

5. Research Methods

There are both quantitative and qualitative research methods used, specifically an on-line questionnaire survey and a hard-copy questionnaire survey, a semi-structured interview and an analysis of tourist turnout data. Selected studies on religious tourism on the local scene as well as global scene are presented in literature review. Various approaches to definition, categorization and perceived value or potential for of religious tourism relevant to our research are described.

5.1. Literature review

Approach to defining religious tourism varies. It is difficult even impossible to find consensus on terms like pilgrim, tourist, religious tourism, spiritual tourism or cultural tourism. Borders between terms blur, and sometimes the terms are used partly or fully interchangeably.

Jirásek (2014) in his article on pilgrimage discusses traveller's inner motives to travelling; he works with terms traveller's 'authenticity' and traveller's 'spirituality'. He claims that according to the literature sources, inner personal relation of the traveller to religion is considered to be the key factor that divides travellers into pilgrims and tourists. In his opinion, the spiritual experience might become the decisive criterion for classification of journeys in the sphere of pilgrimage and the sphere of tourism (Jirásek, 2013).

Rieminen (2012) analyses how Finns understand religious tourism. She herself perceives religious tourism to be tightly connected to religion. However, she claims that she isn't particularly interested in religion but is interested in Christian spiritual matters. This way she illustrates that spiritual tourism might be used instead of religious tourism.

As for forms of religious tourism they were defined in 1992 by Rinschede. He states that religious tourism can be understood as a type of cultural tourism, which is specified by involving visits to religious ceremonies and conferences. The author also states that motivation of religious tourism participants is either partly or completely spiritual. As one of the reasons, the author states that visitors to religious sites often have more motivation for the journey than spiritual activities themselves. Another reason is the mass tourism and the organization of tourism, where travel agencies include additional free time activities alongside the main religious attraction (Rinschede, 1992). In the same year Mary Lee and Sidney Nolan (1992) analysed the concept of religious tourism. They focused on a modern European religious system which they define as a collection of religious attractions, tourist and non-tourist pilgrimages and spiritual festivals. The authors deal with the relationship between 'believing pilgrims' and 'secular tourists'. They stated that, regardless of motivation, all visitors to religious attractions require a certain level of service, from satisfying the most basic human needs, to full commercial development. In the case of frequently visited religious sites they, they could see that visitors can be measured on a scale from highly religious to purely secular, without any knowledge of the spiritual significance of the site. It is clear, therefore, that in such a wide range of visitors' characters there must be a certain gap between their motivation and expectation. However, the authors state that only a small part of the visitors are in the two opposite poles

of the scale. Addressing the possible incompatibilities of different types of visitors should be the task of managing the site (Nolan, Nolan, 1992). *The issue of motivation and expectation was placed into our survey as it closely relates to the management of the religious site, which is discussed in this paper.* Relationship between 'tourism motivations' and 'tourist satisfaction' is researched in the study of Battour, Ismail, & Awais. They test how 'Religion' moderates this motivation-satisfaction relationship (Battour et al., 2017).

Two following cases were for us inspiring as they are close to our concept of the research. They apply qualitative research approach. Griffiths (2011) divides visitors of two cathedrals in Australia into 'those who come to pray' and 'those who come to look'. In her research, she tries to find out the reason for their visit and their feelings to the religious aspects of the cathedral. Rodrigues and McIntosh (2014) explore motivation and experiences for visiting Tyburn monastery. Findings of the research elicited three key experiential themes which were: 'religious experience', 'personal experience' and 'social experience', although the overriding experience was religious. Findings also revealed that all visitors were welcome and were not treated as a burden by the nuns; in contrast to the more negative perspectives that are argued in some previous religious tourism studies (Rodrigues & McIntosh 2014). *Our findings fully correspond to Rodrigues and McIntosh' findings. There are no cases of misunderstanding between believers and other visitors. The castellan (warden) fully confirms a positive coexistence of visitors.*

There is a shift in perceiving religious tourism towards commerce. The available literature from, both, professional and academic sources, tends to treat religious tourism as a product. Religiosity as well as religious travel is moved away from the realm of spiritual enrichment/well-being and turned into yet another commodity to be sold (Tomljenović, 2017). Senior tourism as a niche in religious tourism is explored (Klímová, 2018a, 2018b).

5.2. Religious belief

When religious tourism is discussed, it is vital to find out what religious belief in the Czech Republic actually is. Religious belief ranks among key terms in this study. Relevant data relating to the religious belief in the Czech Republic were taken from the national Czech Statistical Office. Key source was the document *The religious belief of the population according to the census*, which was published in 2014 (Czech statistical office, 2014). Religious belief was part of the census content in 1921-1950 and 1991-2011. The latest data come from the last census in 2011. The main feature of the 2011 census of religious belief compared to previous censuses was that an enormous number of people took the advantage of the option given by the law to leave the question of faith unanswered, see the black bar in the Figure 01. This resulted in a decrease in absolute values among believers as a whole; see the bar with vertical stripes in the graph, but also in the decrease in the majority of individual churches, religious societies, and religions. Believer is a person who has a religious belief (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018).

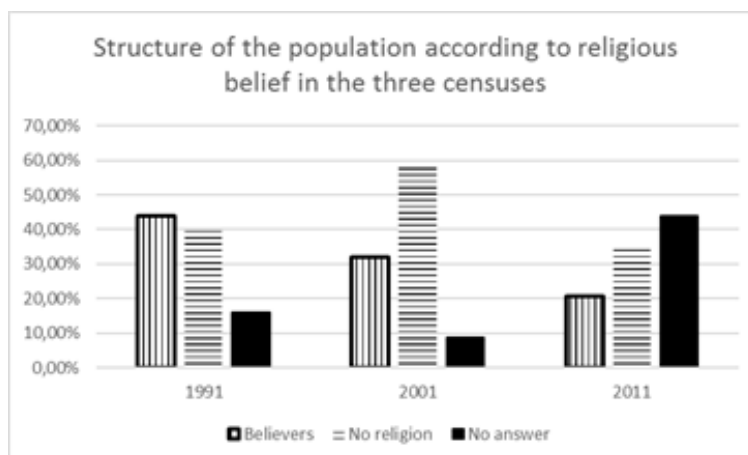


Figure 01. Structure of the population according to religious belief

The Figure 02 illustrates the dominance of that Roman-Catholic Church. It is worth highlighting that only statistical numbers are presented and if respondents do not declare their belonging to the specific church or religion society it doesn't mean that they aren't religious people, they just might consider this issue as purely personal.

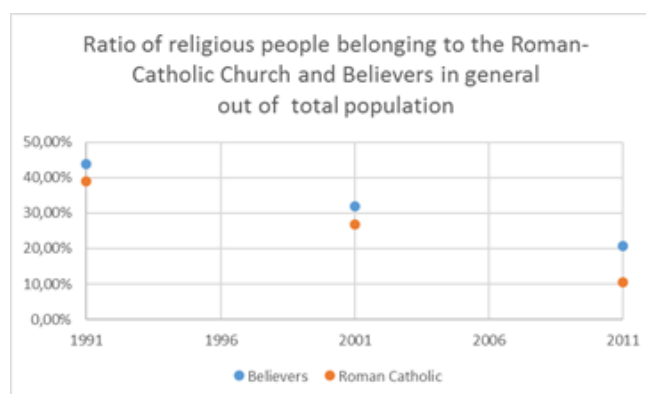


Figure 02. Ratio of Roman-Catholics to all religious community

5.3. Questionnaire

The questionnaire with only 10 questions was designed on the web server survio.com. Link to the survey was distributed via social media. In April and May 2018, 129 responses were collected. In June, 57 visitors of the Pilgrimage church were asked by researchers and guides in the site to fill in the hard-copy of the questionnaire. When data were processed, the research sample of 186 people was divided into 3 groups of respondents: Residents (people who live in the city of Zdar nad Sazavou into which region the Pilgrimage church of Saint John of Nepomuk belongs to), Respondents from other parts of the Czech Republic and Visitors of the pilgrimage site. Age distribution of respondents varied: fewest respondents were in the age group up to 18, most respondents belonged to the 19 - 26 age group in case of filling the questionnaire on-line, and the older generation group formed the visitors on the pilgrimage site who filled in the hard copy of questionnaire. Visitors - respondents were divided into residents and non-residents. Out

of 57 visitors there were 27 residents and 30 non-residents which is 47% : 53%. The similar ratio of residents and non-residents 48% : 52% was in case of on-line respondents.

The question 'Do you consider yourself a believer?' was primarily asked to find out the difference in preferences and experience with pilgrimages between believers and non-believers. The answers show a greater proportion of believers among the respondents from Žďár nad Sázavou and the surrounding area than among others. *There is significant difference between residents and non-residents. 60% of residents claimed that they are believers. But on the other hand, only one fifth of non-residents considered themselves to be believers.*

65% of respondents who filled the questionnaire on-line had never visited the Pilgrimage church of Saint John of Nepomuk. Out of residents, there was only one person who had never been there. 65% of residents had been there several times.

The reason of visiting the site was the next followed item. Among the visitors the most frequent answer was that they visit the site when visiting the city of Žďár nad Sázavou". The second most frequent one was the individual journey to discover this monument. A similar pattern of responses was between non-residents, with the individual journey being more frequent than a casual visit. The most frequently cited reason among the locals was worship service, which corresponds to a higher number of believers among the respondents in this group. The second most frequent answer was the individual pilgrimage.

Satisfaction with the visit of the monument was rated on a scale of 1 to 5; 5 being very satisfied and 1 very dissatisfied. Visitors gave better rating 4.37 points out of 5. However, the site was rather badly evaluated by local residents; the average value was 3.68 points. The average number of non-residents was 4.17. The question was asked to determine the subjective attractiveness of the monument to the respondents. Then respondents were asked what they liked most. This question was open. *The element that attracted the largest number of respondents in all the groups surveyed was clearly the architecture of the monument.* Another part of the answer was the view of the surroundings and the landscape around the monument. Responses were often found under the generic name of *genius loci*. Visitors appreciated work of guides. Then respondents were asked about negative experience connected with the site. In many cases the question remained unanswered. Those who responded were mostly residents. They were dissatisfied with *frequent reconstructions*, even with dilapidation of the monument and some disliked too many visitors at the time of pilgrimage. A problem seems a lack of facilities for tourists. Next question developed the previous one and targeted at the management of the site. Researchers wanted to know what should be improved or what services visitors miss. The most frequent answers in all groups included: *the information centre and toilets*. In 22 responses, there was demand on Wi-Fi and in nine cases demand on accommodation for pilgrims.

Two questions related to the general overview of knowledge of pilgrimage places in the Czech Republic. Findings were rather 'poor'. The awareness of other pilgrimage places was low. Even if the Christian history goes back to the 9th century and has left astonishing monuments, which still serve to believers, there was only low number of respondents who visited them. 63 out of 186 (34%) respondents never visited any other pilgrimage site. The most frequented places were Velehrad and Saint Hill in Moravia. This suggests a *low awareness of pilgrimage in our current society*. Nearly one-third of all respondents said they had no experience with pilgrimages, but they would like to try it sometimes. 11% of

respondents in the online questionnaire showed no interest in the pilgrimage, but none from the visitors. *The pilgrimage trip was performed by 10% of online respondents and 28% of visitors.*

5.4. Interview with the Church Manager

The semi structuralized interview aimed at the management of the church, at the recent changes, visitors and their motives, organized tourism, potential problems between tourist and pilgrims, comparison of national pilgrimages with the local pilgrimage, impact of the rising amount of tourists on the historical site and marketing. Following data in the Table 01 on the site visits were gained from the church manager.

Table 01. Number of visitors and pilgrims in last 3 and half years

Year	Pilgrims	Visitors
2015	257	31, 055
2016	1969	36, 533
2017	230	32 820
2018 (1st term)	441	850

Since 2015, a record of number of pilgrims has been kept. According to the church manager, registered pilgrims are people who are on their pilgrimage to the Church at Zelena hora and within this pilgrimage they perform their worship. Pilgrims, before coming to the site, have to make arrangements with the representatives of the parish. However, people coming to regular worship service aren't included into the statistics. More tourists come because of history than those who come because of church ceremonies. Spring belongs to organized visits of schoolchildren and seniors.

6. Findings

In 2014, the restitution of the church was returned to church administration. So, it is a purely religious monument, at this moment it falls under the Roman Catholic parish in the city of Žďár nad Sázavou. The pastor of the church expressed his intention to restore the monument as a place of pilgrimage. *The manager highlighted in the interview that they work as a pilgrimage church, not parish.* The manager can see weakness in the marketing. The main problem is space; tickets and souvenirs are sold in the church itself. She admits that currently they are not able to organize more guided tours.

The questionnaire survey shows that awareness of plentiful Christian pilgrimage sites is relatively low in the Czech Republic. At the same time, however, almost half of respondents stated that they would like to participate in some pilgrimage. Overall, it can be stated that there is the interest in pilgrimage in the current society. However, according to the interview with the church manager, the infrastructure for pilgrimage tourism around Žďár nad Sázavou and in the Czech Republic generally does not correspond to the fundamental needs connected with this activity. To increase the popularity of pilgrimages could therefore help expand the pilgrimage network, strengthen the infrastructure needed to do it, and promote direct pilgrimage.

Promotion of the Church of Saint John of Nepomuk is run together with municipality of the city of Žďár na Sázavou in press and on municipality websites. The survey of websites on pilgrimage places in the Czech Republic showed that the discussed site is not on web sufficiently presented as a pilgrimage place. For example, when 'pilgrimage sites in the Czech Republic' are written into the searching field in the Google engine, the first address is the server www.poutnimistacr.cz (pilgrimage sites in CZ), but this website doesn't mention the discussed pilgrimage place of the Church of Saint John of Nepomuk. Promotion is based primarily on the UNESCO World Heritage status. Websites promoting UNESCO sites meet the standards of well-designed web (UNESCO Czech Heritage, 2018, a, b).

6.1. Marketing tips based on findings

Several measures have been proposed to popularize religious tourism and promote the Pilgrimage Church of Saint John of Nepomuk. These include the cooperation of the pilgrimage church with travel agencies and the extension of cooperation with schools, especially from the more distant parts of the republic. Findings from the survey suggest that even in our modern society, pilgrimage as a form of tourism is found interesting. In addition to promoting the church as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it was proposed to target more at pilgrims. To strengthen awareness of the pilgrimage, the pilgrimage church at Zelená Hora should cooperate with other pilgrimage sites in the area and jointly build facilities for pilgrims and new pilgrimage routs. To improve the effectiveness of the guided tours, it was proposed to set up a stand outside the church grounds where tickets would be sold and information provided. At the same time, the provisional sale in the interior of the church, which is being criticized by believers, would be removed. The church should also work with the municipality and build a larger parking area near the site.

7. Conclusion

More pilgrims could be brought by better promotion of the place, if the role of pilgrimage site is highlighted and better services provided. Researchers in Slovakia came to the similar findings like us. Insufficient promotion of sites of immense value results in rather low visit of sacral sites. Ecclesiastical and cultural and institutions are blamed from insufficient implementation competencies (Hvizdalova, 2018).

Around 20% of the sites on the World Heritage List of UNESCO have some sort of religious or spiritual connection. Being on the World Heritage List gives destinations a competitive advantage. They can build their image as a religious tourism destination around it (Centre for the Promotion of Imports, 2016). The Pilgrimage church benefits from being on the prestigious list. It doesn't have to face problems connected with mass tourism, like conflicts between believers and ordinary tourists.

Statement that Religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism can be repeatedly found in literature sources (Rinschede, 1992), (Collins-Kreiner, 2010), (Centre for the Promotion of Imports, 2016). Europeans are increasingly drifting from traditional religions towards a more spiritual way of practicing their faith. We agree with this statement partially. In our local case, there is a distinctive difference between more religious Moravia and Bohemia where Czechs consider faith as a more personal affair.

The Pilgrimage Church of Saint John of Nepomuk can be perceived as a pilgrimage place of Christian pilgrims as well as pilgrimage destination of architecture admirers due to phenomenal baroque

architect Jan Santini Aichel. Architecture coupled with strong Christian symbolism of the Pilgrimage church of St. Jan Nepomuk creates great potential to become an important pilgrimage place. Just as it was in the time of its bloom in the 18th century.

Acknowledgments

The paper was supported by the Internal Grant Project of the Faculty of Informatics and Management, University of Hradec Kralove in the Czech Republic 1907/2018.

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