Research on cultural tourism development in sacral and spiritual sites from the UNESCO World Heritage List

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This paper explores the effects of tourism on the transmission of intangible cultural heritage of the tangible sites placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It exercises a preliminary review of literature on intangible values of heritage sites combined with research made on so called cultural tourism development in the sacral and spiritual sites from the World Heritage List. In the research conducted for this paper, sites such as churches, temples and necropolises were taken into consideration. The aim of the research was to understand how the development of cultural tourism affected the spiritual character of World Heritage Sites and which methods of the preservation were taken to avoid the loss of their sacral meaning. Additionally, the purpose of this paper was to critically examine how tourism stimulates the preservation and transmission of the spiritual significance of sacral heritage sites. On the basis of the presented research there were proposed ways of preservation of the intangible character of the spiritual sites in danger of rapid growth of tourism development.

Keywords: management heritage management - sacral heritage sites – tourism management – World Heritage Sites

Introduction

The study presented in this paper is the preliminary research of a broader doctoral research project focusing on management of preservation and transmission of the complex values of tangible and intangible heritage sites. The overall objective of the research project is to estimate both positive and negative factors which have an impact on transmission and preservation of these values.

The research will allow for the development of a complex strategy for management of preservation and transmission of values of intangible heritage sites in Malopolska Region, Poland. The research aims to increase the knowledge about the possibilities and limitations in the management strategy 'preservation through use' and to support a common understanding among local authorities and local communities of use and management of cultural heritage. The objective of this paper is to present the initial results from one of the working packages.

We can observe the increasing number of publications which focus on tourism development in World Heritage Sites and in particular, that of cultural tourism. Most of them relate to the tourists' consumption of heritage, in the context of heritage as an experience or as a product (Edson 2004; Moscardo 2002). Recently we have been able to observe the growing number of studies focusing on tourism management within heritage sites (Pedersen 2002). Despite this, the majority of discussions on heritage and tourism focus on economic and socio-cultural impacts on heritage, analysis of its benefits and outcomes, impact of tourism on preservation and conservation of heritage (Bendix 2009; Bowitz and Ibenholt 2009).

This paper focuses specifically on sacral and spiritual heritage sites which a portion of tangible values carry on a unique intangible meaning for their local communities and for the religious groups as a whole. Globalization, democratization, international and local cultural preservation initiatives, the penetration of the market economy, the commoditization of culture, and the politics of religious and ethnic

identity impinge upon and shape many of the religious sites in the World today (Singh 2008). The purpose of this paper is to critically examine how tourism stimulates the preservation and transmission of intangible values of sacral and spiritual heritage sites by underlying the main factors leading to the danger of losing their unique character. The research was mainly focused on information policy of sites managers, as it is one of the crucial elements which allows for the sustainable development and preservation of heritage sites and their values.

Sacral and Spiritual Heritage Sites

The 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention defines several components belonging to the domain of cultural heritage. These include monuments, architectural works, works of monumental sculpture, paintings, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value historically, artistically and scientifically. Groups of buildings both separate and connected which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value again from a historical, artistic or scientific point of view. Sites, works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view" (UNESCO 1972). The following features are to be considered as the universally accepted properties of cultural (tangible) heritage; (1) it represents an unique masterpiece of human creative genius, (2) it bares an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared and (3) it is directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs.

The very special place in the definition mentioned above should be admitted to sacral and spiritual heritage sites which apart of features characteristic for tangible sites carry on series of intangible, spiritual values. What is known as a sacred place carries with it a whole range of rules and regulations regarding people's behaviour in relation to it, and implies a set of beliefs to do with the non-empirical world, often in relation to the spirits of the ancestors, as well as more remote or powerful gods or spirits (Carmichael 1998). That fact gives a unique character to sacral and spiritual Heritage Sites.

Sacred sites exist in hundreds, or maybe thousands, of the world's 'official' protected areas. More than eighty places which carry on sacral or/and spiritual meaning are currently inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Most of them are important places for present-day religious and spiritual communities. However in some areas there is no observable continuity between the sacred sites of the past and the present – and yet these ancient sites are still recognized, and to some extent treated as special places (e.g. pyramids in Egypt, Neolithic tombs, etc). Some sites which have religious significance may also assume historical or political importance, as religious sanctuaries in Poland which have been used as shelters by people fleeing from political persecution. To say that a specific place is a sacred place is not simply to describe a piece of land, or just to locate it in a certain position in the landscape. It is also to describe all intangible features and beliefs associated with it. Many authors demonstrate that the significance of sacred sites can transcend cultural changes and assimilations, and even religious conversations (Carmichael 1998).

Following Shackley's classification we can distinguish eleven types of sacred sites: single nodal feature, archaeological sites, burial sites, detached temples/shrines, whole towns, shrine/temple complex, 'earth energy' sites, sacred mountains, sacred islands, pilgrimage foci and secular pilgrimage (Shackley 2001). This paper focuses on selected types of sacred sites: single nodal features, whole towns, shrine/temple complexes and pilgrimage foci (see annex 1).

The uniqueness of sacred heritage sites is not only in their architectural/natural beauty, but mostly in values which they carry on. The sacredness of the site is alive as long as people look at the site from a sacred perspective and with respect for its intangible, spiritual values (Shackley 2001). Intangible values are complementary elements of the monuments, without which those objects lose their remarkable cultural value. That unique value of intangible objects was noticed by the international community and taken under protection as a result of the UNESCO 2003 Convention on safeguarding intangible heritage. By intangible cultural heritage includes oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts and also the cultural space, which is recognized by the community as its heritage (Convention 2003). As intangible heritage we can also define the historical networks and structures within communities, traditions of places and communities. This is also often referred to as as genius loci, the spirit of the place, skills, names and traditions accepted by those who inherit the past (Bronski 2006). This kind of heritage is transferred by the generations and constantly performed by communities, in relation to their environment and history. For these communities the intangible heritage is the source of their community spirit. For those reasons it is necessary to protect not only the tangible, material monuments but also the integral part of these, the transmission of values. However it is cooperation between site managers, local communities and scientists that is essential to protect the intangible value of the places.

Heritage and tourism

The way that communities present and communicate their culture is cultural heritage. It is an important element of life and activity of all people. It is a carefully selected set of values, attitudes, way of understanding the world, existence and coping with life transferred from generation to generation. Representations of heritage are not only material objects, which can be touched or seen, they are also traditions, rituals, knowledge, objects and the cultural space connected with them. It has both, material and intangible value which describes the culture of the society. Cultural heritage is an inseparable element of the life of society in terms of both it's tangible and an intangible components. It can also be the element of its social and economic development.

Heritage can be discussed in three dimensions, culturally, politically and economically. For the purpose of this paper the focus has been diverted to the analysis of the economic dimension of heritage. As an economic resource, heritage may be used in various forms. It can be observed in recent years that a huge development of heritage industry. This can be defined as „major commercial activity which is based on selling goods and services with a heritage component" (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). A significant role in this industry should be admitted to tourism and leisure services. However the manufacturing and sale of heritage products can be considered as similarly important. Cultural heritage is often utilised for creating images of places and for promotional purposes of the regions.

Cultural tourism during past years became a growing phenomenon in the field of tourism. It became the object of interest not only among practitioners in tourism management, but also between scientists. Cultural tourism can be described as tourism which is based on heritage, where heritage is the core of the product that is offered and is the main motivating factor for the consumer (Swarbrooke 1994). This definition may contain a wide range of tourist activities, starting from visiting historic cities and including the whole accompanying infrastructure. Cultural heritage tourism is important for various reasons; it has a positive economic and social impact, establishes and reinforces identity, helps preserve the cultural heritage, with culture as an instrument it facilitates harmony and understanding among people, supports culture and helps renew tourism (Richards 1996). Looking at heritage from tourists' point of view heritage is an attraction which should be interesting and accessible. There can be observed various reasons for tourists being attracted by heritage, beginning from heritage by itself and ending with other events associated with the site such as concerts and theatre performances. Heritage tourism is a relatively new phenomenon even though it can be said that travelling for cultural or historic motivation has been popular since the ancient times. In recent years however there can be noticed a rapid growth of interest in heritage among tourists. The growing popularity of heritage tourism may be also explained by the development of new types of heritage tourism products (Ratz and Puczko 2003). This phenomenon is also connected mostly with the more disposable income, growth of leisure time and increased mobility which is associated with increase of tourism in general. The flow of tourists to sites and sacred buildings increases exponentially in response to a growing demand for spirituality, authenticity and search of cultural roots (Presti and Petrillo 2010).

Sacred sites are arguably the oldest type of visitor attraction within the tourism system. Religion for all societies and cultural groups has been an integral motive for undertaking journeys and usually considered the oldest form of non-economic travel (Jackowski 1998). Currently Jackowski estimates that about 240 million people go for pilgrimages per year (Jackowski 1998). The form of those travels also changed within past centuries. Currently religious travels in a high extent depend on economic issues.
Most of World Heritage Sites are major cultural tourism attractions for the region in which they are situated and some of them such as Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galileein -in Israel are universally recognised symbols of national identity. It can be said that the majority of visitors to these sites are mostly motivated by an interest in culture, nature and heritage. It could be assumed that the World Heritage Site status automatically results in a high number of visitors. However from what was determined in the research presented in this paper, visitor numbers depend on various factors, including the fame of the site, its accessibility or the way it is marketed. On one hand some sites such as the Acropolis in Athens are so widely and well known that it seems to be obvious for visitors that they are on the World Heritage List. On the other hand, less know sites such as Villages with Fortified Churches in Transylvania do not often benefit from their World Heritage status. The high numbers of visitors to World Heritage Sites is often influenced by such issues as accessibility, transport, accommodation, and other provisional services (Edson 2004).

Nowadays it can be said that the central challenge in heritage tourism is the way of reconstructing the past in the present through interpretation (Nuryanti 1996). Interpretation of heritage is not only connected with historic facts, but also with understanding, awareness and enjoyment of visited heritage monuments (Stewart 1998, Herbert 2001, McCabe 2004).

Visiting a sacred site is an activity that is nested within a framework of cultural and religious tourism. Religiously or spiritually motivated travels have become an important segment of international tourism. Despite this, few sacral and spiritual sites were designed to cope with the volume and flow of today's visitation patterns and the expectations of modern day visitors. The managers of sacred sites may see their primary function as being conservation and preservation of both the site and religious tradition as well as being opposed to provision of facilities to visitors. On the other hand there can be clearly visible growth of interest in economic potential of religious tourists. A challenge which appears for site managers

is to find a balance between preservation of spiritual and religious issues and providing facilities for development of tourism within heritage sites.

Methodology

The studies presented in this paper were based on a complex analysis which consisted of observation of Web pages of selected World Heritage Sites (see Annex 2) and questionnaires which were distributed to more than forty sacral and spiritual UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The list of Heritage Sites which responded to the questionnaire till the end of February 2010 is presented in Annex 1. In the research there was also included critical review of literature on tourism in sacral and spiritual sites.

The aim of Web pages observation was to analyze the scope of information about the heritage sites placed on their web internet web pages. This method was chosen because nowadays Internet is a powerful tool for communication and transfer of information. The heritage site managers creating the web page of their site at the same time are creating their virtual 'business cards'. By placing various kind of information there they are creating the image of the Site and showing the way of its development. The analysis of Web pages took place in January 2010. It lead to finding the answers to the following questions: (1) how broad is the awareness of a web page's creators and managers of the value of their heritage site?; (2) what is the tourism management strategy within the information policy of the site?; (3) on which factors is the most stress placed in the management strategy of the Website of a given heritage site, for instance the preservation of the spiritual character of the site, preservation of its architectural values or the development of tourism?; (4) how should the information about the world heritage be passed on to the heritage sites users? Much attention was attention to the "News" section of the websites, which allowed identifying the main features of institutions responsible for the heritage sites' activities, especially those connected with the preservation and promotion of the site.

The questionnaires distributed to World Heritage Sites aimed to reveal the opinions of heritage sites' managers on current models and trends in tourism management implemented in their sites in two areas. Included in the questionnaire were the two categories of culture and economics and the effects that they have on heritage-inspired tourism. In the questionnaires the site managers were asked for their opinions on how tourism affects the spiritual character of their sites and how they try to deal with this. The questions asked to the sites' managers aimed to find answers to the following questions, (1) how has the development of cultural tourism affected the spiritual character of the World Heritage Sites?; (2) if the site managers noticed any danger for the site because of the tourism development; (3) which approaches of preservation were taken to avoid the loss of the sacral meaning of the sites? This part of the research is still under investigation. This paper presents the results only from ten of the selected heritage sites. The selection of those objects was dictated on the premises of choosing the larger, more famous monuments, which are characterized by a heavy flow of tourists throughout the year, to represent different types of sacra objects (see Shackley's classification); the number of objects included in the research were proportional to the general number of those types of objects placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. On this basis there were four subjects selected from single nodal features, four subjects from the shrine/temple complex type, one subject from whole towns and one object from the pilgrimage foci category. Broader scale research is still under realization. The results of the whole research will be presented in due time.

The combined research of the two components mentioned in the preceding paragraph allowed for conclusions to be drawn about the character of the relationship between tourism management, preservation of specific intangible characters of religious heritage sites and attitude of heritage site managers to the development of tourism within their sites. It also allowed for a deeper insight as to what level the site managers are aware of the sacredness of the location they manage and their attitude to the worshippers and to the tourists. The study presented in this paper allows for the continuation and development of the research conducted in order to create a strategy which focuses on the preservation of complex and particularly intangible values of the World Heritage Sites.

Due to the small research group of only twenty seven pages and 10 questionnaires, the results presented in this section of the paper do not allow for generalisations to be made regarding the topic. They do however demonstrate the necessity for broader research, as the availability of information and sufficient resources are key factors in being able to present new knowledge to society. The professional information on cultural heritage is an essential matter which allows for its preservation and sustainable development.

Literature Review

At first glance, heritage, information and communication technologies (ICT) may not seem to be compatible. Yet on closer examination, it becomes apparent that IT has an increasingly important role to play in the marketing of heritage. Consideration of the characteristics of heritage highlight the challenge presented to heritage sites to become more market-orientated. ICT provides a potent means by which heritage marketing can become more dynamic from the perspectives of management, presentation and distribution (Bennet 1997). A broad initiative to increase the use of information technology, from computers to digital field instruments, satellites, and the Internet, in the documentation of, conservation

of, and communication of World Heritage was initiated by UNESCO in 2008. Unfortunately the results of this program are not yet available, indicating that the problem of ICT and heritage was noticed. It is easy to find the literature on usage of 3D models and other advanced technologies for promotion. Presentation of the heritage objects (e.g. El-Hakim 2004) are all the more easily accessible yet it is hard to find subject literature focusing on information policy of heritage sites. Some publications make mention of the issue yet do not go into great detail (Shackley 2001; Drost 1996). As it is indicated in the 'A User-centered Model for web Site Design' by Kinzie (Kinzie 2002), which is one of the small number of publication on web design dedicated straight to heritage sites managers, there are very few publications which contain instructions for site managers on how to design and develop the website from the user-centered approach. This lack of adequate theoretical information background for the site managers, who are often not specialists in IT leads to the situation that quality of web sites of heritage sites is not relevant to the object that it should describe.

Furthermore an issue which leads to the research on usage of information technologies by heritage site managers is the development of research on destination image concept. The study of destination image is a relatively new topic to the field of cultural tourism research. However, several studies have illustrated that destination images have a strong influence on tourist behavior and their perception of the destination (Hunt, 1975; Pearce, 1982). In essence, the research suggests that those locations with strong, positive images are more likely to be considered and chosen in the travel decision process (Goodrich, 1978; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). As a result, destination image has an important role in the process of managing the tourism in the heritage site (Schmoll, 1977; Moutinho, 1984; Echtner and Ritchie 2003). Numerous studies have already been undertaken to measure the images of destinations, such as states, regions, and countries. However most of them focus on how to create the destination image to be attractive and interesting for tourists, and the interest in the site of local communities is placed on the second plan. In this context there are also many publications on management of sacral and spiritual heritage sites (e.g. Githitho 2003; Carmichael 1998). Also they focus mainly on site management in reality and they omit the virtual world which currently became the most important information source and marketing tool.

The main characteristic of Internet is that it allows for the creation of environment, in which many different levels of life are intersecting. It allows the users to find a variety of information from sundry sources. This considered, the internet is a powerful marketing tool. It is important that the heritage sites' managers are aware of that fact and are able to use the Web and its possibilities in a proper way. As was mentioned earlier, in society today the Web page of the destination is its profile in Internet-form. It is the Web creator's responsibility to make of it an interesting source with a variety of information, focusing on the tangible and intangible values of the site, instead of simply creating a commercial profile of the site directed to tourists.

Therefore the purpose of this paper is to critically examine if and how the Internet is used as a marketing tool for sacral and spiritual heritage sites. This will allow for further studies to take place on how to effectively use the Internet as a marketing tool for heritage sites, particularly sacral and spiritual heritage sites. The research presented in this paper focuses on tourists as a group of heritage users to whom most information is addressed. Following Rosenfeld's classification of information seeking it can be said that tourists usually represent the so called exploratory search [Rosenfeld 2003]. It means that the information users, in this case the tourists, are not fully aware of what they want to find. However they do hope that during that process they will learn and find something new and interesting. Tourists usually have very unclear knowledge regarding the place that they want to visit. For this reason web site managers should provide them with information that is as detailed as possible.

Findings

Currently we can observe a rapid growth of information space. As new information and communication technologies appeared, the term 'information space' was expanded with electronic space, also referred to as virtual or cyberspace. It is developing parallel to the real space, in which the object is physically situated. Both of them are affecting each other, mostly by having impact on their perception by the users.

A prime challenge of modern regional policy is to market through the use of ICT the attractiveness of a certain region in order to generate growth of tourists' visits and expenditures. An important contribution of cultural heritage lies in the support of the destination image generation. This means that, for example, cultural heritage is not only a source of historical information affecting the image of the attraction itself, but also the broader destination image. Consequently, information provided to potential visitors has an impact on the destination image. Thus, ICT has become one of the competitive tools in regional tourism policy (Goeldner and Ritchie 2002).

A part of the research presented in this paper focused around the issue of 'existing' World Heritage Sites in the Web. In the research twenty seven Web pages of four types of sacred heritage sites were examined (see Annex 2). This research was limited to official Web pages of the selected heritage sites run by the institutions responsible for the sites' management. The main stress during the analysis of Web pages was placed on the of availability of information about the sacral/spiritual character of the site.

The typical scheme of the Web page of all types of sacral/spiritual heritage sites included in the research consists of the following elements: 'about the site', short history, general information about the

architecture, events, sightseeing/things to do, e-shop, gallery and information for visitors, including information about opening hours, tickets, group and/or individual sightseeing, accommodation and food. Information placed in parts connected with history and architecture of the site usually has very general character, they focus mainly on the crucial facts and give just an overview about the history of the site. Most of the Website is dedicated to what is often referred to as as tourism information with a strong promotional character. A tourist interested in visiting the heritage site can find on the Web page all necessary information: from opening hours and ticket prices to information about the accommodation and traditional food in the area. All of analysed Web sites had an e-shop or information about souvenirs available in the shop located in the site. A significant place is also dedicated to the events organized in the sites connected with promotion of local culture and traditions. This is most evident on the web pages of heritage sites from South America, Asia and Pacific regions. This give an impression of a highly commercial character of those Web sites and consequently to the destinations themselves.

Only nine of analysed Web sites included information about the religion and pilgrimage, including Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey, and St Martin's Church in the United Kingdom, Churches of Peace in Jawor and Swidnica in Poland, Durham Castle and Cathedral in the United Kingdom, Lumbini, the Birthplace of the Lord Buddha in Nepal, the Sacred City of Kandy in Sri Lanka, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, the Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park in Poland, Saint Catherine Area in Egypt, Bahá'i Holy Places in Haifa, the Western Galilee in Israel, and Poblet Monastery in Spain. The web sites of these locations reflect the unique sacral character of the sites and contain instructions for visitors which aim to create awareness and respect for the spiritual character of the heritage sites. The lack of such information on other Web pages may cause the failure of a preservation strategy of the sites as well as the collapse of the transmission of intangible values of the site. Some sites, for instance the Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey, and St Martin's Church in the United Kingdom offer a wide range of activities concentrated on education of heritage even though they focus mainly on tangible, architectural values of their sites and their preservation. These sites omit intangible sacral values of the heritage sites.

Those outcomes suggest that Web pages administrators mostly concentrate on 'commercial tourism information'. This kind of information is very attractive and interesting for potential visitors of the site as it gives them a detailed overview on the facilities available in the location. On the other hand by dedicating so much space on the Web page to such information, the space for religious information, which would show the unique sacral character of the heritage sites, is often limited or even omitted, as was discussed previously. We can say that the site managers present a 'tourist oriented' strategy in constructing the website of the heritage site and not, what could be referred to as 'heritage content oriented' strategy. As a result, it often occurs that the site visitors are not aware of the uniqueness of the place and thus do not have ample respect for it. The web pages ' analysis revealed the lack of balance between touristic and what goes after that, economic values of the site and their intangible, spiritual values which were the reason for inscribing them to the World Heritage List and for giving them status of the monument of humanity. This fact may be due to heritage sites' managers' lack of awareness of potential consequences of this kind of tourism focused policy and paying too much attention to touristic and economic development of the site and going further from their local area. There is a necessity for finding a balance between these two elements, tourism/economy and preservation of the cultural values of the site. The construction of the web pages of analysed heritage sites demonstrated that the information policy of site managers is concentrated mostly on supplying information regarding the facilities for tourists that are available in the site.

As an integral part of the research a questionnaire was distributed to the sacral/spiritual World Heritage Sites managers. This part of the research is still in progress. For this reason, presented are the interpretations made on results from ten questionnaires received from heritage sites managers as of February 2010 (see Annex 1). The findings from the questionnaire placed in this paper do not represent general trends in tourism development in sacral/spiritual sites from UNESCO World Heritage List. However they show the variety of tourism impact on preservation and transmission of intangible values of sacred heritage noticed by heritage sites' managers.

The affection of tourism on spiritual heritage sites can be considered in two areas: (1) cultural and (2) economic. Amongst the entire list of heritage sites a significant growth of tourism after the inscription to the UNESCO World Heritage List was noticed.

Cultural changes visible in sacral heritage sites generally display positive character. All of the sites managers who answered the questionnaire suggested that, especially among local and regional communities, there can be an observed growth of interest in their local/regional culture and their heritage which is strongly connected with the inscription to the UNESCO List. Heritage Sites which have a status of UNESCO World Heritage Site for an extended period of time are making an effort to utilise that situation to broaden the awareness of local/regional communities about heritage by organizing special lectures, seminars and cultural events within the site. This is also visible on their Web sites where they place many educational materials dedicated to the local heritage.

What was also indicated in the questionnaire however is the differences regarding the tourists coming out from the region of the heritage site, especially considering foreigners visiting the site. They visit the sites mostly due to their artistic, architectural and/or natural values. They are often unfamiliar with the regional culture, traditions and religious beliefs. They do not show due respect to the place and

especially to its intangible character. This behavior generally comes about as a result of their shortage of knowledge about the intangible, cultural features of the site. This is often caused by lack of proper information about the character of the site as was also revealed in the analysis of Web pages of heritage sites (see above). The sites' managers try to deal with this situation by implementing restricted areas within the site, by organizing special guided tours or by providing special courses and workshops for volunteers and staff working within the site to ensure that they are well prepared to work in the heritage site. It happens, especially during the summer period that those methods are not enough. During the time of heavier tourist flow, visitors interested in serious pilgrimage and spiritual visits seem to avoid the sites, which are not able to provide them the desired silence and the space for praying. This situation is visible mostly in developed countries, where heritage tourism is a huge industry and there can be observed a large flow of tourism in all heritage sites. Heritage Sites from developing countries currently did not notice this situation, but they will face it due in time (Throsby 2003). What is interesting from the point of view of this article is that none of site managers indicated the heritage site web page as a place where the information about the character of the site and it's cultural value could be posted.

The influence of tourism development on sacral and spiritual heritage sites can be also discussed in its economic aspects. All questionnaires showed that tourism development has a significant influence on the economy of a given heritage site and its local and regional community. The income coming from tourist visits is for all heritage sites, the main source of funding for preservation and restoration of the objects within the site. The lack of such funding would risk the destruction of the site. Preserving cultural heritage at religious sites requires for allowing the local community to continue using the site whilst religious practices often can be disrupted by the presence of tourists. As was indicated, inappropriate tourist activities and commercial development around the religious heritage site may result in the trivialization of the site and in loss of its unique character. Many religious heritage sites encourage donations to help compensate for the impacts of tourism, but donations rarely cover the cost of maintenance and preservation (Olsen, 2006).

Managers of heritage sites situated in developing regions pointed out the positive impacts of tourism on local communities and their financial situation. Many heritage scientists have also indicated the economic effect of heritage on the local economy in terms of generated revenues as well as on employment growth (Bowitz and Ibenholt 2009). On the other hand however tourism   contributes to higher prices and living expenses in the area. Site managers paid attention to private tour operators in the area, which according to site managers need regulation by local government. Tour operators interested in growth of their income lead to commercialization of the sites. When heritage religious sites and practices are commercialized and changed for easy tourist consumption, the site often risks losing its authenticity (McKercher and du Cros, 2002). The level of commercialization at sites which aim to accommodate for tourism is often in conflict with what is appropriate at a religious place. However, management of sites without considering the tourist experience leads to dissatisfaction and lack of support for cultural historic preservation.

Summary

The ideal situation is when a visit to a sacred site is an essentially spiritual experience, uncontaminated by technical and commercial realities. Visiting a sacred site should be an emotive experience and site managers are also charged with the task of preserving the spiritual quality referred to as a 'spirit place'. A sacred site should offer the attendee a window on infinity (Shackley 2001). At the same time they must facilitate the religious use of the site and cater for the frequently conflicting demands of worshippers and visitors. Site managers may have to cope with heavy but uneven visitor flows, or with special festivals and events that may attract crowds running into the millions. Providing opportunities for authentic experiences of sacred places and the spiritual culture of region management strategies should ensure sustainable tourism that benefits both the tourist and the community (Levi and Kocher 2009).

The research presented in this paper allowed for the following conclusions on the possible ways of preservation of sacredness of spiritual heritage sites. There can be distinguished three main challenges created by tourism at religious heritage sites: overcrowding, inappropriate tourist behavior which often comes from the lack of understanding or knowledge about the character of the site and commercialization. The presence of tourists at heritage sites causes physical and social impacts (Levi and Kocher 2009). When there are too many tourists, these places may lose their intangible spiritual character.

The most common approach aiming to reduce overcrowding at sacred heritage sites is to charge entrance fees. However this method causes a discussion about the propriety of fees at religious sites which are based on assumption of being open to everyone. The other way which aims to deal with overcrowding is limitation of opening hours for tourist (Olsen 2006).

Inappropriate tourist behaviors can be controlled in several ways. In some places   including Canterbury Cathedral in the United Kingdom, tourists are often not allowed in chapel areas during services to reduce conflicts. It is also a common practice to have guides and staff members in various places in the site available to answer questions and to control the behavior of tourists. Some heritage sites are also providing areas available for tourists who wish to engage in worship oriented activities. What is necessary to be done in this case is to provide tourists with appropriate information and educational materials available in tourism information centers, heritage sites' Web pages and inside the site itself. Such practises

would lead to the tourist becoming more aware of the type and character of the place which they are visiting. That would also help to preserve the transmission of intangible values of the site. In the research it was observed that many sites do not provide such materials to their visitors.

The main problem which is faced by sacred heritage sites is their commercialization. This was visible during the analysis of both parts of the research, the questionnaire and the web page analysis'. The site managers focus on informatin about the herritage site faclities, such as opening hours, shops, accomodation, etc. This information is very useful and important from the point of view of visitors, but do also give the impression that they are the most important things in the site and blanket the information about the real value of the heritage site. Commercialization is a process which cannot be avoided at all. However site managers should do as much as possible to limit its impact on the site, having in mind especially the pilgrims who go there for spiritual reasons as well as the local communities. It is often claimed that tourism enhances the preservation and transmission of cultural values. Following the conception stated among others by Richard Engelhardt (2005), "Sustainable tourism can bring improved income and living standards for local people. Tourism can revitalise local culture, especially traditional crafts and customs". What is crucial in this statement is that tourism development must be sustainable, what means well developed and well managed.

The information management strategy should respond to needs and expectations of two groups of site visitors, tourists and pilgrims or local communities. Following this, a balance will be made between the commercial and heritage-based information. Also there should be an increased amount of attention paid by site managers to the new information technologies such as the Internet, which is currently the main source of information for all groups of heritage site users.

There should be provided special areas for local entrepreneurs where they have the opportunity to sell their goods. Site managers should also pay further attention to the events organized in the heritage site area to ensure that they comply with the character of the site. Further more, there is the need for regulations connected with tour operators' activities which would lead to common agreement and understanding about the uniqueness of intangible values of the site and necessity for its preservation.

To conclude, the primary the aim of sacred heritage sites' managers should revolve around the issue of visitor experience, how the site conveys its spiritual message, its 'spirit of a place' and preservation of that unique intangible character of the place. An increased awareness should be encouraged towards the religious feelings of visitors and local communities. Although tourism is a growing industry which brings particular benefit economically to the heritage site, it cannot be forgotten that the main use of the heritage site should be connected with its primary, spiritual function.

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ANNEX 1

Table 1.   The list of the heritage sites which answered the questionnaire distributed to their site managers till the end of January 2010.

no	Name of the site	country
SINGLE NODAL FEATURES		
1.	Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey, and St Martin's Church	United Kingdom
2.	Notre-Dame Cathedral in Tournai	Belgium
3.	Roskilde Cathedral	Denmark
4.	Pilgrimage Church of St John of Nepomuk at Zelená Hora	Czech Republic
SHRINE/TEMPLE COMPLEX		
5.	Benedictine Convent of St John at Müstair	Switzerland
6.	Monastery of the Hieronymites and Tower of Belém in Lisbon	Portugal
7.	Church Village of Gammelstad, Luleå	Sweden
8.	Wooden Churches of Southern Little Poland	Poland
WHOLE TOWNS		
9.	Sacred City of Caral-Supe	Peru
PILGRIMAGE FOCI		
10.	Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee	Israel

ANNEX 2

The list of Web pages of selected sacral and spiritual World Heritage Sites included in the research. All the Web pages were accessed between 15-31 January 2010.

Single nodal features

Aachen Cathedral - Germany - http://www.aachencathedral.com/

Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch – Germany - http://www.kloster-lorsch.de/

Boyana Church – Bulgaria - http://www.boyanachurch.org/

Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey, and St Martin's Church – United Kingdom - http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/

Church Village of Gammelstad, Luleå – Sweden - http://www.lulea.se/engelsk/gammelstadchurchtown.4.e80e04 119324d918780001202.html

Churches of Peace in Jawor and Świdnica – Poland - http://www.kosciolpokoju.pl/index.php?D=1

Durham Castle and Cathedral – United Kingdom - http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/

Golden Temple of Dambulla – Sri Lanka - http://www.goldentemple.lk/siteN/about/

Notre-Dame Cathedral in Tournai – Belgium - http://www.tournai.be/en/officiel/index.php?page=19

Petäjävesi Old Church – Finland - http://www.petajavesi.fi/kirkko/index.php?lang=en

Sun Temple, Konârak – India - http://www.konark.nic.in/index.htm

Whole towns

Lumbini, the Birthplace of the Lord Buddha – Nepal - http://www.lumbini.info/index.asp

Sacred City of Caral-Supe – Peru - http://www.caralperu.gob.pe/nueva/directoriotelef.html

Sacred City of Kandy – Sri Lanka - http://www.kandycity.org/index1.html

shrine/temple complex

Cistercian Abbey of Fontenay – France - http://www.abbayedefontenay.com/abbayedefontenay.htm

Jelling Mounds, Runic Stones and Church – Denmark - http://www.fortidensjelling.dk/jellinge30.htm

Jesuit Missions of the Chiquitos – Bolivia - http://chiquitos.santacruz.gov.bo/

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: the Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park – Poland - http://www.kalwaria.eu/

Painted Churches in the Troodos Region – Cyprus - http://www.paintedchurchesofcyprus.net/

Poblet Monastery – Spain - http://www.poblet.cat/index.php?&&&ZW4%3D

Rila Monastery – Bulgaria - http://www.rilamonastery.pmg-blg.com/Home_page_en.htm

Saint Catherine Area – Egypt - http://www.sinaimonastery.com/en/index.php?lid=1

San Millán Yuso and Suso Monasteries – Spain - http://www.monasteriodeyuso.org/

Seokguram Grotto and Bulguksa Temple – Korea - http://www.sukgulam.org/

Villages with Fortified Churches in Transylvania – Romania - http://www.fortified-churches.com/

Wooden Churches of Southern Little Poland – Poland - http://www.drewniana.malopolska.pl/Default.aspx

Pilgrimage foci

Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee – Israel - https://bahai.bwc.org/pilgrimage/