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Department „Economics and organization of tourism“

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VIA ADRIATICA -
CULTURAL TOURISM
WITHOUT BOUNDARIES“**

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THE HISTORIC CITIES OF VIA ADRIATICA AS CULTURAL TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Sonya Alexieva
New Bulgarian University
e-mail: pr@pr-bg.eu

Abstract: The destinations focused on the Balkan cultural tourist trips were developed based on the cross-border cultural corridors with special focus on cultural tourism. The antique roads (Via Diagonalis, Via Adriatica, Via Pontica) are identified today with dozens of world cultural and natural heritage sites, which attract more and more European tourists on the Balkans.

The messages that the state administration, the local community, and the tourist business, all together convey, unite along building on the positive image of the destinations along the road of Via Adriatica and offering a quality tourist product of cultural and historical tourism. The big potential of the historic cities of Via Adriatica transforms the cultural corridor into a chance to explore exceptional cultural sites, which are part of cultural heritage. They attract tourists in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and Greece with legendary names, like Split, Sibenik, Dubrovnik, Kotor and other.

Meanwhile the route of the famous Olive Road (starting in Western Europe towards the south to Peloponnese, Greece, and the Mediterranean coast) falls exactly within the scope of Via Adriatica, which invests in both tourist development and the promotion of olive products. Thus the cultural corridor Via Adriatica offers cultural tourism without borders, uniting the tangible and intangible heritage of the historic cities with the messages of the mythic Olive Road.

Keywords: cultural tourism, tourist destination, Via Adriatica, cultural corridors, historical towns

In the framework of the vast topic of cultural corridors we must first of all analyze the role of their related cultural tourist sites, which draw to many of the Balkan destinations. Their diversity encompasses historic cities, tangible and intangible heritage, cultural traditions, lifestyles, local landmarks, landscapes, etc.

The cultural heritage related to the old antique roads is part of the treasure, which cultural tourism uses to attract to the regions. On the one hand it brings to life and changes the economy and the quality of life of the local communities, while on the other it has to rely on the balanced and sustainable use of the heritage in order to preserve it and deliver it to the next generations.

At the base of the functioning models for cultural tourism development, including the ones on the Balkans, lie the specific requirements uniting the state and the public, the business and the tourist associations, in the common goal of developing, but also regulating, the influences on the cultural and natural resources. The formula for making use of them while optimally preserving them involves understanding the upkeep and preservation of cultural heritage. The harmonious development of the modern cultural environment requires a complex analysis and control when preserving the historic cities -

from architectural planning to urbanization of the territory¹, from conserving the ecosystems to preserving the landscape, etc.

MAKING USE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN A BALANCED AND SUSTAINABLE WAY

A destination's attractiveness depends upon the availability of primary resources and related „unique opportunities for tourist activities”, as well as on the development of „infrastructure, superstructure, and the tourism industry with its goods and services”². However, attractiveness stems directly from image as „a platform for expectations from travelling to a destination”.

Attractive tourist destinations that rely on cultural tourism enhance the strengths of its heritage and nature by using the principles of balanced and sustainable use of resources. Each decision of urban development concerning historic cities, as well as directing the flow of tourists towards trips along the cultural corridors, are part of the integrated decisions, according to the changes in the economic, social and cultural life in the area³.

The destinations focused on the Balkan cultural tourist trips were developed based on the cross-border cultural corridors with special focus on cultural tourism. The antique roads (Via Diagonalis, Via Adriatica, Via Pontica) are identified today with dozens of world cultural and natural heritage sites, which attract more and more European tourists on the Balkans.

The messages that the state administration, the local community, and the tourist business, all together convey, unite along building on the positive image of the destinations along the road of Via Adriatica and offering a quality tourist product of cultural and historical tourism. The big potential of the historic cities of Via Adriatica transforms the cultural corridor into a chance to explore exceptional cultural sites, which are part of cultural heritage. They attract tourists in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and Greece with legendary names, like Split, Sibenik, Dubrovnik, Kotor and other.

A recognized definition of historic towns and urban areas makes the following summary: „they are made up of tangible and intangible elements. The tangible elements include, in addition to the urban structure, architectural elements, the landscapes within and around the town, archeological remains, panoramas, skylines, view-lines and landmark sites.”⁴

Within the context of the Balkan destinations for cultural tourism one cannot define the significance of the cultural sites, artifacts and other, in particular – the key role of

¹ The Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas - Adopted by the 17th ICOMOS General Assembly on 28 November 2011 - http://www.international.icomos.org/Paris2011/GA2011_CIVVIH_text_EN_FR_final_20120110.pdf

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² Rakadjiiska, S., Marinov, S., Dyankov, T., *Tourism Marketing*, Nauka i Ekonomika Publ., University of Economics, Varna, 2013, p. 428 / Ракаджийска, С., Маринов, С., Дянков, Т., В: *Маркетинг в туризма*, изд. Наука и икономика, Икономически университет – Варна, 2013, с. 428

³ Same reference - The Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas

⁴ Same reference - The Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas

historic cities, without expounding on the significance of the historic area as a notion. According to experts ⁵ it has a „special role for the integration ties between cultural heritage and tourism” as: „the part of earth’s surface which, independent from its territorial scope or topographic uniformity , generally has a cultural historical coherence and identity, encompassing interrelated traces from the past, remarkable in their historical, archeological, artistic, scientific, social and technical attraction”.

THE HISTORIC AREAS: A FIELD FOR INTEGRATION OF CULTURE AND TOURISM

The significance of both the symbolic and actual cultural environment, logically subordinated to the accumulated with time cultural historical processes, enhances the values and magnetism of each national and regional destination. “It is precisely this concentration of cultural values that makes the historic areas an integration domain for culture and tourism. The historic area is a complete *cultural environment*, which encompasses individual and group cultural values, cultural landscapes, historical settlements, cultural routes, valuable natural habitats and traditional landscapes (within the meaning of the European Convention on Landscapes). This cultural environment cannot be territorially restricted - its territorial scope depends on the logic behind the cultural and historic processes at the respective local, national, regional or continental level” ⁶.

In the midst of exploring the cultural routes is the enigma of their significance as an “exceptional tourist phenomenon, a ground for making the desired integration of culture and tourism in the historic territories”. Their value lies in the their design and development precisely as „integrated cultural-historical package provided that they include, along with the specified cultural environments, also public infrastructures: tourist, transport communication, supplemented by attractive by-products and activities” ⁷. In this respect the modern cultural destinations „integrate spiritual and economic relations, natural and cultural values, into integrated cultural and tourist systems”.

IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY OF THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

According to the International Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the definition of cultural heritage includes „monuments, groups of buildings and sites, while natural heritage – natural features, certain natural sites or zones of exceptional universal value” ⁸ and other geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas. The trends and problems of the tourist industry, the change in the customers’ attitudes, and the impacts of new technologies imply that the criteria for the preservation of our cultural and natural environment need to be updated.

The cultural value (architectural, archeological, artistic, intangible/spiritual, etc.) lies in the core of this system, distinguished as a tourist product, with reviving infrastructure around it. Having such features, the cultural destinations create the environment in the historic areas for applying the principle of the „competitive cluster” as a

⁵ Кръстев, Т., Историческите територии: интеграционно поле за култура и туризъм - В: http://litenet.bg/publish25/t_krystev/istoricheski.htm - © Електронно издателство LiterNet / Krastev, T., The historic areas: a field for integration of culture and tourism, publ. LiterNet - Read on: 10.06.2015

⁶ Same reference

⁷ Same reference

⁸ See more at: Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage - Definition of the Cultural and Natural Heritage (Article 1) - <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/> - Read on: 10.05.2015.

basis for sustainable regional development of various industries related to tourism. This creates the opportunities „to express the entire identity and diversity of the cultural environment at a certain level; to stimulate the internal resources in the areas, to achieve a balanced distribution of the tourist streams; to revive the cross-border communications, to establish coordinated regional policies in the field of cultural heritage and tourism”⁹.

This proves not solely the significance of the cultural destinations and their contribution towards the „establishment of cultural and tourist products in the historic areas”. In fact they are an „integrated package of objects of cultural and natural heritage along with the diversity of life cultures, cultural events, specific means of interpretation and marketing, integrated in the public infrastructure. This package should have possessed the quality of *sustainability* and be suitable to participate in the tourist market”¹⁰. It is the variety of registered cultural tourism sites making the fame of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Turkey as tourism destinations that is at the basis of successful Balkan itineraries.

The development and promotion of these itineraries is based, in the first place, „...on preserved heritage and resources; a thorough analysis and a strategy devised to develop the potential of cultural tourism on the Balkan Peninsula; the quality and variety of the tourism product offered; the availability of modern infrastructure and the use of communication technology; common marketing and advertising of the destination as a whole...”¹¹.

Meanwhile the route of the famous Olive Road (starting in Western Europe towards the south to Peloponnese, Greece, and the Mediterranean coast) falls exactly within the scope of Via Adriatica, which invests in both tourist development and the promotion of olive products. Thus the cultural corridor Via Adriatica offers cultural tourism without borders, uniting the tangible and intangible heritage of the historic cities with the messages of the mythic Olive Road.

THE BALKAN CULTURAL TOURISM DESTINATIONS

In the core of some of the most amazing cultural routes are the sites along widely known cultural corridors (Via Diagonalis, Via Pontica, Via Adriatica, etc.), for which many European and Balkan countries are distinguished as cultural tourism destinations. After many years of efforts, following the integration of common messages through known intercountry forums, international scientific conferences, round tables, tourist exhibitions and others, today the competitive tourist product of Balkan cultural tourism is an established fact. It is of key importance for the creation of sustainable development and improving the local economies, and is also a vital element of regional and European diversity.

The preservation and development of historical cities is also testimony of the preservation and interpretation of cultural heritage, which inspires not sole partnership in

⁹Кръстев, Т., Историческите територии: интеграционно поле за култура и туризъм - В: http://litenet.bg/publish25/t_krystev/istoricheski.htm - © Електронно издателство LiterNet / Krastev, T.

- In: The historic areas: a field for integration of culture and tourism, publ. LiterNet - Read on: 10.06.2015

¹⁰ Same reference

¹¹ Alexieva, S., Via Diagonalis: The messages of cultural tourism – In: *Cultural corridor Via Diagonalis – Cultural tourism without boundaries*, publ. Gea Libris, Sofia, 2013, p. 332 /Алексиева, С., *Виа Диагоналис: посланията на културния туризъм* – В: *Културен коридор Виа Диагоналис – културен туризъм без граници*, изд. Гея Либрис, София, 2013, с. 332

tourism, but also enhances the ever changing already more appealing vision of the Balkans. Within the context of the tourist destinations it promotes their recognition and the establishment of the „trademark” of the Balkan cultural routes.

What do they include and why are they attractive to the European tourist? How can the diversification of the tourist product that the Balkan countries offer (through individual or group trips), be a significant factor in attracting new European consumers?

The historic cities in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and other, have a rich past, preserved architectural heritage, and beautiful nature. Many monuments of culture are sites included in the World Cultural and Natural Heritage List of UNESCO. In Croatia only they attract tourists to the Diocletian's Palace, part of the historical complex in Split, to the basilica „St. Erasmus”, to the „St. James” cathedral in the Old City of Dubrovnik, to the historic city of Trogir, to the Old City on Hvar Island, to the National Park „Plitvice Lakes”, which includes 16 lakes situated in a unique natural environment, etc. The history of medieval Zagreb; the place of birth of Marco Polo – Korcula town, the unique gallery of Ivan Mestrovic ¹² in Split; the old Kotor with its fortress walls, gates, churches, squares, „St. Tryphon” catholic cathedral; the famous „Stradun” street in the heart of Dubrovnik and other, are just a small part of the Balkan treasures.

The well-preserved heritage of these historic cities, the sumptuous museum collections, the conserved artifacts, restored fortresses, churches and squares are among the key sites part of the cultural trips along Via Adriatica. They are an example of the attitude towards the diversified cultural environment and the result of the integration of common policies, which the Balkan countries correlate and protect in the name of the heritage of the cultural corridors. In tourist politics this means something else.

How do we integrate the ancient roads into the modern attractions, for example: the path the famous Olive Road ¹³ follows, which is within the scope of Via Adriatica? How to make the force of the legends last by relying on tangible and intangible heritage, on some of the most well-known Balkan products? One of the examples was with the support of the European Union when in 2011 Croatia and Montenegro began the implementation of a joint project aiming to develop tourism by introducing and promoting olive products¹⁴. It included developing “agricultural tourist trips where the guests will be introduced to the technology of production and the kinds of olives cultivated in this part of the Balkans”.

MYTHICAL ROADS, FESTIVALS AND ATTRACTIONS

The European Institute of Cultural Routes ¹⁵ was founded in 1997. It is widely recognized that „the certification awarded to a cultural itinerary by the Council of Europe enhances its capacities in terms of heritage tourism, raises its attractiveness to tourists, and contributes to its sustainable development”. The Balkan cultural routes, incl. the ones on Via Adriatica, complement the experiences of the tourists with the discovery of unique events, which increase manifold the visits to the historic cities. Here we must emphasize the „added value” which festivals in tourism generate as a whole.

¹² See more at: The Mestrovic Gallery - <http://www.mestrovic.hr/> - Read on: 26.06.2015.

¹³ See more at: The Routes of the Olive Tree - <http://culture-routes.net/routes/the-routes-of-the-olive-tree> - Read on: 26.06.2015.

¹⁴ Tourists choose the road of ...the olives in Montenegro and Croatia /Туристи тръгват по пътя на...маслините в Черна гора и Хърватска - <http://www.infotourism.net/index.php?t=27538&m=1> - Read on: 25.06.2015

¹⁵ Cultural Routes - <http://culture-routes.net/routes> - Read 25.06.2015

Festival tourism is among the most attractive and preferred subtypes of cultural tourism. Each year, it attracts millions of tourists to specific tourist destinations through unique events and authentic celebrations. Being more than just travelling for the purpose of attending different art festivals and folk celebrations, it „offers an opportunity for travellers to take part in a wide variety of traditional and modern-time events. Its attractiveness lies in the concentration and good combination of special interests that turn travel into entertainment and amusement”¹⁶. In addition to the purely economic aspect of the impacts world festivals produce, „this type of tourism reflects on important concepts like „brand’ and „image’ . Festival tourism adds new components to destination image and advertises the history and culture of key host cities in a non-standard way”¹⁷.

This is testified by some of the most popular festivals, which enthrall to historic cities like Dubrovnik, Zagreb, Split, Ohrid and other. The tourists are exceptionally fascinated by two of the biggest festivals in Dubrovnik. The most popular and oldest in Croatia is the summer festival in Dubrovnik¹⁸, which is organized in the Old City (July) and gathers the public with its rich program, pulling along the locals and many tourists to theatre performances, open-air concerts, folklore dances, etc.

Among the most remarkable annual events in Dubrovnik is the old century and centuries old Carnival Fest (February), which offers medieval tournaments, Ball of Masks, street theatrical performances and a lot of joy and amusement while attending the carnival procession of tourists from all over Europe. The annual almanac of this historic city includes also Dubrovnik Shakespeare Festival (April), Dubrovnik International Opera Festival (July), Dubrovnik International Wine & Jazz Festival (September), the International Film Fest, etc.

A lot of tourists and guests are lured to visit Zagreb by the world cartoon festival *Animafest*, the well-known musical festival *Inmusic* - near Zagreb¹⁹, the International Folklore Festival in the city; in Split – the renowned music marathon *Ultra Europe* and the interesting event Storytelling Festival „Prichigin”; in Split the famous festival „Summer in Split” is among the oldest cultural events; in Ohrid – the folk festival „Ohrid Lake”, the famous Summer Festival of Ohrid with more than 50 years of history, and other. The diversity and vocational fulfillment of tens of similar cultural events, attractions and other prove how „the growth of cultural tourism may assist in the development and revival”²⁰ of the regions, it may influence the economy and the competitive market, and by preserving the cultural heritage „to impact the quality of life in the acceptor communities”.

CONCLUSION

All these examples of the treasures of historic cities, their preserved architecture in a diversified cultural environment, all of which stimulates tourism, prove the necessity of coordinated regional policies on the Balkans in the field of cultural heritage. They not only

¹⁶ Alexieva, S., Festivals in the focus if cultural tourism – In: *Journal of Science & Research*, Vol. 2 (6), Sofia, 2013, p. 51 /Алексиева, С., Фестивалите във фокуса на културния туризъм – В: *Journal of Science & Research*, Vol. 2 (6), София, 2013, с. 51

¹⁷ Same reference, p. 57

¹⁸ History of Dubrovnik Summer Festival - <http://www.dubrovnik-festival.hr/en/history> - Read on: 20.06.2015

¹⁹ Animafest - <https://www.inmusicfestival.com/en> - Read on 20.06.2015

²⁰ Fourth European Conference of Ministers responsible for the Cultural Heritage, Final Declaration and resolutions. Helsinki, 30-31 May 1996 - http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/Resources/Texts/Conf4_EN.pdf - Read on: 10.06.2015

change the paradigm of classical cultural tourism, but also supplement it with modern events and attractions, with advertising and promotion of a quality and modern tourist product. The integration of common cultural routes in the Balkan countries, the joint exhibition of the most interesting legends and symbols of ancient roads, are part of the successful efforts in tourism to revive the cultural corridors.

Along with the economic, social and cultural impact for the regions, these efforts are changing the brand; they improve the Balkan countries' vision and the mindsets about their future. Adding new content to the current and future projects related to Via Adriatica is an example of cultural tourism without borders – by preserving and developing the historic cities where the cultural heritage on the Balkans is interpreted and revived.

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