

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL SITES

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Abstract: Uniqueness, authenticity, and attractiveness have firmly occupied the forefront of tourist interest, with cultural tourism representing a segment of supply that attracts strong tourist motivations. Research confirms that cultural tourists, on average, possess higher levels of education, greater incomes, and spend more money while traveling than other categories of tourists. The aim of this paper is to present the diverse, authentic, and unique tangible and intangible heritage and to provide insight into how cultural tourism and heritage can contribute to sustainable development. The study employs a review of existing relevant literature to analyze the current state of tourism based on cultural and historical heritage. The article demonstrates an ambition to contribute to the broader debate on the theoretical and practical relevance of the topic, while taking into account contemporary needs and challenges, by outlining practically applicable guidelines for the development of new urban policies grounded in cultural and historical heritage. In addition to highlighting the intensifying competition among tourist destinations, the paper also points to critical determinants of tourism, particularly in destinations with limiting capacities. An adequate interpretation of cultural heritage contributes to the creation of a new architecture of value systems and unique characteristics that are in direct correlation with the strengthening of the identity of a tourist destination. Such an interpretation, supported by technological innovations, becomes a desirable platform for generating global

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tourist interest, an inexhaustible source of inspiration for artists, and an additional incentive for researchers.

Keywords: *tourism, cultural and historical heritage, cultural site, sustainable development*

RAZVOJ TURIZMA KROZ ODRŽIVO UPRAVLJANJE KULTURNIM LOKALITETIMA

Sažetak: Jedinstvenost, autentičnost i atraktivnost čvrsto su zaposeli vrh turističkog interesovanja, a kulturni turizam je segment ponude koji za sebe veže jake turističke motive. Postoje istraživanja koja potvrđuju da kulturni turisti u proseku imaju više nivo obrazovanja, veće prihode i da troše više novca na putovanjima od ostalih. Cilj rada je da se predstavi raznoliko, autentično i jedinstveno materijalno i nematerijalno nasleđe i pruži uvid u to kako kulturni turizam i nasleđe mogu da doprinesu održivom razvoju. Istraživanje koristi pregled postojeće relevantne literature kako bi se analiziralo aktuelno stanje u turizmu zasnovanom na kulturnoj i istorijskoj baštini. U članaku se prepoznaje ambicija da, uvažavajući savremene potrebe i izazove, doprinese sveopštoj debati o teorijskoj i praktičnoj korisnosti teme rada, navodeći praktično primenjive smernice u vezi sa kreiranjem nove urbane politike zasnovane na kulturnom i istorijskom nasleđu. Osim sve zaoštrenije konkurencije među turističkim destinacijama, u radu se ukazuje i na kritičke determinante turizma, naročito na destinacijama s limitirajućim kapacitetima. Adekvatna interpretacija kulturnog nasleđa doprinosi kreiranju nove arhitekture sistema vrednosti i jedinstvenih karakteristika koje su u direktonoj korelaciji sa osnaživanjem identiteta turističke lokacije. Ovakva interpretacija, podržana sa tehnološkim inovacijama, postaje poželjna platforma za generisanje interesovanja turista iz celog sveta, neiscrpna inspiracija umetnicima i dodatni motiv istraživačima.

Ključne reči: *turizam, kulturno-istorijsko nasleđe, kulturni lokalitet, održivi razvoj*

1. INTRODUCTION

The diverse cultural and unique historical heritage constitutes a genuine tourist magnet that creates a qualitative distinction among destinations and attracts an increasing number of visitors. Given that cultural heritage is both unique and touristically appealing, policymakers in the field of tourism face the challenging task of simultaneously ensuring all prerequisites for the sustainable development of heritage sites while safeguarding and preserving them for future generations.

In recent decades, tourism has become one of the leading socio-economic sectors. For the first time in history, in 2012, more than one billion tourists traveled worldwide within a single year. This development has generated vast opportunities for growth and job creation, opened avenues for small and medium-sized enterprises, provided a material foundation for the revitalization of places and communities, and promoted both natural and cultural heritage (Rifai, 2015).

Beyond merely attracting visitors, culture- and heritage-based tourism plays a significant role in enhancing their overall satisfaction. The unique and authentic characteristics of a destination's cultural past may serve as a key point of differentiation and attractiveness for tourists, while the adequate interpretation and promotion of historical events, often supported by animation, can further enrich visitor experience. However, as Suryani (2024) notes, the rapid growth of tourism poses a threat to cultural authenticity, heritage preservation, and the sustainability of the natural environment. Balancing the promotion of cultural heritage with sustainable practices represents a complex challenge for destinations striving to maximize the benefits of tourism while simultaneously minimizing its negative impacts.

Culture and heritage embody the beliefs and values of a community, the shared behaviors acquired as a result of living within a group and a defined geographical area. Kumar (2017) points out that cultural heritage linked to tourism could serve as an important tool for sustainability and suggests that it would be desirable to enhance various forms of tourism with the full participation, management, and ownership of indigenous populations, while avoiding negative impacts on other local communities and the ecosystems of which they are part.

Sustainability is one of the most crucial frameworks for action in the field of cultural heritage, highlighting its potential to increase social capital, stimulate economic growth, and ensure environmental sustainability. Culture and cultural heritage can contribute significantly to achieving inclusive and sustainable deve-

lopment. The framework consists of three sets of measures (European Commission, 2021):

1. Urban and regional regeneration through cultural heritage.
2. Promotion of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings.
3. Aligning approaches to cultural heritage with sustainable cultural tourism and natural heritage.

The intensification of global competition and the ongoing shifts in the spatial allocation of investments compel governments to develop strategies that define the role of cities and their broader regions in supporting local communities at the national level and strengthening their position on the international stage. The challenge for cities lies in enhancing their image and reinforcing their global standing by preserving and maximizing the authenticity of their local identity and traditions. In addressing this challenge, it is essential to reconsider urban development through a comprehensive and explicitly formulated urban policy (Theodora, 2020).

Surveys on cultural tourists indicate that, on average, they possess higher levels of education, greater income, and spend more on travel compared to other groups. Research has also shown that tourists interested in visiting historic cities, monuments, archaeological sites, and museums predominantly belong to older age cohorts. These cohorts are not only proportionally growing but also tend to have the greatest purchasing power and are increasingly inclined to spend rather than save (Geser et al., 2014).

However, success in the global tourism market requires a clearly defined national tourism development strategy that incorporates comparative advantages, along with continuous efforts to raise awareness of the protection and maintenance of cultural resources and to create distinctive visions for the development of local destinations. Additionally, rigid and archaic labor regulations, lacking the capacity for flexibility and mobility of the qualified workforce, emerge as a significant constraint to more rapid tourism development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture, together with cultural heritage, represents an expression of a nation's identity, history, tradition, and civilization, as well as an indicator of its existence in time and space. Petrović et al. (2020) examined the significance of religious and cultural tourism for the development of local communities in Kosovo and

Metohija, and their findings revealed that cultural tourism contributes to both regional development and cultural values. Similar results were reported by Dramićanin and Sančanin (2020), who confirmed that culture constitutes an important element of a destination's tourism product, while tourism serves as a mechanism for meeting diverse cultural needs of tourists. The interplay between culture and tourism supports the cultural sector, fosters innovation and creativity, enhances destination image, and strengthens social bonds between tourists and the local population.

For the development of cultural tourism to be sustainable, an appropriate cultural heritage management system is required; otherwise, resources risk being irreversibly lost or permanently damaged. To avoid such a scenario, Povodac and Jovanović Tončev (2015) argue that destination management must involve not only representatives of various levels of government but also experts in cultural heritage protection, tourism professionals, and business stakeholders. In their study *"Management of Cultural Resources for the Improvement of Cultural Tourism Supply in Vrnjačka Banja"*, the authors conclude that cultural tourism represents one of the forms of tourism activity capable of enhancing the quality of the existing offer of Vrnjačka Banja.

Milošević (2014) emphasizes that even countries with significantly less developed tourism sectors are beginning to formulate cultural tourism policies, recognizing this form of tourism as an opportunity for economic and overall social development. The author further highlights that culture in tourism is increasingly understood as a fundamental value and a strong tourism asset, regardless of whether it represents a complementary or a central component of the tourism offer.

The diversity of cultural tourism creates opportunities for developing subcategories with distinct offers within the broader framework of cultural tourism. It is suggested that cultural tourism should not be limited solely to the consumption of cultural products rooted in the past; contemporary culture and the lifestyle of a nation or region may equally form part of the cultural tourism product. In this respect, Stojanović (2023) observes that cultural tourism can be perceived both as heritage tourism, relating to the artifacts of the past, and as artistic tourism, which is associated with contemporary cultural production.

Linaki and Serraos (2020) link culture with methods of multi-criteria decision-making. In their study *Recording and Evaluating the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Assets of a Place through a Multicriteria Decision-Making System*, they analyze and assess existing bibliographic references and address gaps in research on intangible heritage, identifying trends within the broader cultural heritage sector. The two core principles of their work involve documenting and evaluating the

cultural significance of intangible heritage in a given place. The authors seek to draw attention to new tools that, at the outset of the process, record and assess specific cultural assets using both quantitative and qualitative criteria. In this way, a ranking of the most significant tangible and intangible cultural assets of a place is established, providing a foundation for their effective management.

Özgeriş et al. (2024) conducted a study at the Öşkvank Monastery, dating back to the 10th century and located in northeastern Turkey. Despite its significance as a tourist attraction, the monastery lacks a protection or management strategy, thereby jeopardizing its transmission to future generations. The research focused on cultural heritage management through sustainable tourism development and was carried out using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. As part of the study, a survey was conducted, and the results indicated that participants did not sufficiently value the monastery in terms of sustainable tourism principles.

Competitive performance in tourism is based on several simultaneous dimensions, primarily attractiveness, productivity, marketing, and destination management. The objective is to enhance the destination's appeal in order to achieve an optimal balance between value for money and effort invested, to determine the level of market readiness for visitation, as well as pricing. For a destination to penetrate target markets and niche segments, it is essential to establish an efficient marketing system that can identify new sources of competitive advantage. Enhancing productivity constitutes a key prerequisite for maintaining the long-term capital value of a destination, which in turn can secure wage growth and attract new investment. Furthermore, it is crucial to implement a destination management system that can govern the destination intelligently while also improving its attractiveness to investors, fostering sustainable growth, and enhancing the perceived quality of life for local communities (Official Gazette of RS, 91/2006).

3. INTERPRETATION OF MATERIAL AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Cultural heritage is defined as “a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge, and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places over time.” Cultural heritage of any society consists of both tangible and intangible dimensions. The distinction between the two lies in the fact that

the tangible refers to pragmatic expressions, that is, produced objects, whereas the intangible encompasses the spiritual, social, artistic, or physical processes involved in the creation of tangible forms. There are also cases where intangible heritage remains non-materialized, such as in singing and other oral traditions (Partarakis, 2021).

Exhibition provides the physical accessibility of heritage to audiences; however, physical accessibility alone is insufficient to ensure a complete visitor experience. Krivošejev (2014, p. 166) emphasizes the necessity of both intellectual and emotional accessibility. Concretely, this means that, in addition to the opportunity to view the heritage object (physical accessibility), visitors must also be provided with additional information about the object and its broader context. Only in this way, through the dissemination of knowledge, can intellectual and emotional accessibility be achieved.

Cultural heritage is defined as “a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, regardless of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge, and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places over time.” The cultural heritage of any society consists of both tangible and intangible dimensions. The distinction between the two lies in the fact that tangible heritage refers to pragmatic expressions, i.e., produced objects, whereas intangible heritage pertains to the spiritual, social, artistic, or physical processes that accompany the creation of tangible forms. In certain cases, intangible heritage remains non-materialized, as in the examples of singing and other oral traditions (Partarakis, 2021).

Exhibiting heritage ensures its physical accessibility to the public; however, physical accessibility alone is insufficient to provide a complete visitor experience. Krivošejev (2014, p. 166) emphasizes the need for both intellectual and emotional accessibility. This specifically means that, in addition to offering the opportunity to view heritage objects (physical accessibility), institutions must provide supplementary information about them and their broader context. Only in this way, through the dissemination of knowledge, can intellectual and emotional accessibility be achieved.

Serbian culture, characterized by its authenticity and simultaneous openness to other world cultures, is grounded in a rich heritage and remarkable creative achievements, leaving an indelible mark far beyond national borders. Sančanin and Dramićanin (2019) argue that every future concept of heritage protection and interpretation should encompass its material, intangible, and natural components and contexts. Only an integrative approach to the protection and presentation of cultural and natural heritage can ensure sustainable development. Baltà Portolés

(2018) notes that interest in cultural heritage is closely tied to its potential to support economic development, while also emphasizing that its effective economic capitalization requires expertise in management and conservation. In this regard, Sorea and Popescu (2022) point out that the sustainable enhancement of cultural heritage, which generates well-being, demands community participation, managerial and conservation expertise, as well as the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and skills. These characteristics, which directly reflect European cultural heritage policies and their implications, provide a sustainable general framework for managing heritage resources. The capitalization of such resources varies depending on their specific attributes, such as history and origin.

Liu and Lin (2021) maintain that interpretation and presentation are indispensable components of the overall process of heritage preservation. In response to new opportunities and challenges arising from evolving perspectives on conservation, the advancement of exhibition technologies, and the growth of cultural tourism, cultural heritage institutions face the complex task of developing a systematic framework for the interpretation and presentation of heritage sites. Such a framework must be capable of effectively conveying the significance and value of heritage to the public while offering visitors a meaningful and enriching experience.

Starting from the definition of cultural tourism as a selective form of tourist mobility motivated by cultural and artistic goods, values, and contents (Đukić Dojčinović, 2005), cultural institutions, in their aspiration to become more visible and accessible to the public, are motivated to offer attractive programs through authenticity and exclusivity. Radosavljević and Ljubislavljević (2019) investigated whether the digitized presentation of museum collections in Serbia could serve as a potential driver for the development of cultural tourism. Although numerous museums have initiated the process of digitizing tangible and intangible heritage in recent years, the authors emphasize that digitization alone is not sufficient to increase visitation. Instead, it is necessary to integrate digital tools with new technologies and appropriately implement them within the marketing strategies of cultural institutions.

Virtual reality and related applications reveal parts of the real world of cultural heritage while simultaneously supplementing or creating entirely new virtual worlds in which visitors can interactively participate, even in real time, since digital platforms make such experiences possible. The advantage of modern technologies, particularly virtual reality, lies in the speed of information transfer, the ability to update content, and the opportunity for active involvement of the observer (Dramićanin & Sančanin, 2022). However, digitized heritage units must also be accompanied by storytelling. Knowledge and narrative, when structured and

integrated into a digital object, motivate users to actively and interactively engage with heritage materials, thereby providing new and engaging opportunities to learn about heritage. Such knowledge should undoubtedly be capitalized on across different domains, and especially within the field of cultural tourism (Tošić Grlač, 2016).

4. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL LOCATIONS

The Council of Europe Framework Convention (2005) emphasizes the importance of heritage as a key platform for sustainable economic development. In this regard, several principles deserve particular attention:

- *The principle of intergenerational equity.* Respecting this principle ensures access to cultural resources for future generations.
- *The principle of social sustainability.* The goods and services generated by cultural heritage should provide quality of life for those engaged in its preservation.
- *The principle of responsible cultural heritage management.* Heritage protection is a matter of collective responsibility, and a multifunctional approach should secure the involvement of both the private and non-governmental sectors.
- *The principle of sustainable use of heritage.* Dynamic plans and heritage management strategies should ensure sustainable patterns of spatial use, the utilization of renewable and non-renewable resources, as well as the broader economic justification of investments in heritage.
- *The principle of social profitability of investments in cultural heritage.* This principle highlights that the implementation of heritage protection projects generates social benefits, grounded in economically justified and rational activities.
- *The principle of respect for and preservation of cultural identity diversity.* Heritage management programs should safeguard the cultural diversity of ideas, beliefs, traditions, and related expressions.
- *The principle of a holistic approach to cultural heritage.* Development policies should aim to strengthen cross-sectoral connections and foster cooperation among public authorities, NGOs, local communities, and the private sector.

The management and development of cultural resources, as well as policies concerning the governance and advancement of cultural tourism, should take into account the following:

- Support the development of cultural and artistic creativity;
- Employ art and culture as instruments for achieving non-cultural objectives and for shaping policies in such a way that culture and cultural development are understood as a broad adaptive resource related to essential determinants, such as national identity and image;
- Create and strengthen community well-being;
- Safeguard cultural resources by determining their sustainability or absorption capacity (Pančić Kombol, 2006).

Mass tourism represents a form of tourism characterized by a large number of people from all social strata traveling in an organized manner, most often during the season. Tourist activities have traditionally been focused on generating maximum profit, with insufficient attention devoted to the sustainability of such an approach. Krivošejev (2014) emphasizes that, in the long term, this approach is unsustainable, given that in many destinations it has led to various forms of destruction, while the endangerment and even disappearance of cultural, natural, and intangible heritage have often been the consequences. As a result, destinations with devastated and degraded environments have recorded a decline in demand, and consequently, a decrease in profit.

One of the illustrative examples of the consequences of mass tourism is evident in Dubrovnik (Croatia). UNESCO and ICOMOS reports highlight problems caused by excessive tourism development and related services, the rising cost of living, and gentrification, all of which have resulted in a decline in the quality of life of the local population and the endangerment of its World Heritage status. Problems have also been identified in the scope and manner of construction within urbanized areas, the reduction of public space, the loss of public green areas, and the overburdening of traffic infrastructure. In such a context, the imperative has become the alignment of development priorities with the integration of sustainable development principles (Faculty of Architecture, 2021).

Special interest tourism has emerged as an alternative and a response to the increasingly visible negative consequences of mass tourism. Although its development has been relatively slow, it has achieved a distinctive position in the 21st century. This form of tourism fosters sustainability, as it often involves individual or small-group travel, connects all key stakeholders in the development of tourism services and offerings, and disperses tourism demand. In doing so, it reduces

pressure on natural and cultural resources and does not disrupt the everyday life of the local community (Rabotić, 2013).

The richness of compact urban and rural historical settings, the tangible and intangible heritage of various historical epochs, and the legacy of ethnic and religious communities represent a significant advantage for the development of cultural tourism in Serbia. However, one of the most critical shortcomings lies in the inadequate infrastructure for tourism offerings. For the majority of sites, necessary conservation measures have not been implemented, which is a prerequisite for their sustainable use in tourism. Additionally, supporting facilities that would “revitalize” cultural assets are lacking, particularly in terms of the interpretation of individual heritage sites and their broader context (Domazer et al., p. 32).

COCLUSION

Tourism is recognized as one of the most significant global industries, exhibiting an exponential growth trend. Its development is directly conditioned by the sustainable management of cultural sites, where economic and ecological indicators, as well as the multiplicative effects associated with tourism activities, are equally valued. Although the promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, through its authenticity and uniqueness, contributes to enhancing the overall image of a tourist destination, in the coming period greater investments will be required in high-quality infrastructure and superstructure, new technologies, and skilled human resources. Only through proactive action, and innovative and creative approaches to tourism policy-making, will it be possible to achieve the desired breakthrough on the global tourism map. The interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage significantly contribute to the construction of a desired identity, intensifying tourist interest in visiting a destination while simultaneously motivating local communities to recognize tourism as a profitable activity, and encouraging the academic community to engage in more extensive scientific research. Bridging the seemingly opposing poles of the past, embodied in cultural heritage, and the future, envisioned through emerging digital technologies, should not be viewed as an unbridgeable distance, but rather as a reality that presupposes adequate management of cultural heritage and tourism activities in all their forms and representations. Harnessing the potential of cultural heritage for tourism development must be based on a detailed analysis of its impacts on the local environment, cross-sectoral strategic planning, and proper destination management, supported by continuous cooperation with relevant stakeholders

from the public, private, and civil sectors. The importance of digitalizing cultural heritage constitutes an undeniable tourism potential; however, for this potential to acquire meaning, digital heritage must be transformed into a tangible tourism product. All of this requires a radical shift in the tourism industry toward the adoption of cultural resource management and the implementation of a new, more innovative, and creative marketing approach.

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