

CULTURAL TOURISM – CROATIAN PERSPECTIVE

M. DUJMOVIĆ & A. VITASOVIĆ

Faculty of Economics and Tourism Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Croatia

ABSTRACT

In modern tourism, the concept of big and mass tourism has been abandoned, and the support has been given to responsible development based on the selected types of tourism. The existing mass and uniform types of tourism are being refined by new and higher quality contents; on the other hand, new types of tourism are also being developed which, thanks to their originality and diversity, enrich its content.

In that context, culture has a direct impact on tourism and tourism increasingly affects culture, which has become an important motive for tourist travel. While some 30 years or so years ago cultural tourism implied heritage tourism, that is, visits to cultural and historical monuments, museums and galleries, some 10 years ago that phenomenon underwent its transformation, so that today the same term also implies different cultural and entertainment events and almost all manifestations of living and working cultures.

Today, cultural tourism includes tourist travel during which tourists are active participants in the cultural life of the social community they visit, and popular culture represents the part of non-material cultural heritage which forms a new, although often neglected, way of the tourism product diversification. It is our aim to review the general trends in cultural tourism today as well as reveal the realities of the Croatian cultural-tourism product and establish the level of its development within contemporary Croatian tourism.

Keywords: cultural tourism, cultural resources, Croatian tourism, culture, heritage, history, past, tourism, tourist, tourist experience.

1 INTRODUCTION

As a social, economic and cultural phenomenon, tourism is in the process of permanent and powerful changes. Due to the increase in both standards of living and free time, tourism has developed into a mass phenomenon and directing of a large number of people towards tourist destinations led to specific ecological, cultural and social consequences. At the beginning of 1980s, the dissatisfaction with mass tourism led to the development of a new, differentiated and segmented special interest tourism, based on the concept of sustainable development and responsible exchange for all participants (mutually valuable both for tourists and the local community) and it is individually oriented.

The term special interest tourism (specific forms of tourism, selective forms of tourism, and selective tourism) includes those tourism forms which are oriented towards activities attracting a smaller number of passionate visitors, including different hobbies or activities enjoyed by a small number of participants. Douglas *et al.* [1] describe special interest tourism as an alternative to mass tourism. Special interest travellers go on a holiday to enjoy a product or service satisfying their particular interests and needs. Such tourists are in search of unique and compelling experiences.

As opposed to individual tourism of privileged groups and mass tourism, contemporary tourism is characterised by mass structure and equally by an increasing cohabitation of mass tourism and special interest tourism. The existing mass and uniform types of tourism have been refined by new and higher quality contents; on the other hand, new types of tourism have also been developing which, thanks to their originality and diversity, is enriching its content. New types and sub-types of tourism have been in constant creation as a consequence of newly emerged circumstances and tendencies in modern tourism. In this way, all possible negative effects are diminished and positive socio-cultural, spatial and time and economic elements and effects are enhanced.

2 CULTURE AND CULTURAL TOURISM

Culture has a direct impact on tourism and tourism increasingly affects culture, which has become an important motive for tourist travel. In the modern society, special significance has been given to leisure activities and cultural consumption. It is a well-known and widely accepted fact that tourism as a social phenomenon consists of products of the national culture, which represents not only the particularities of each nation, its identity, but also it is a link with other societies [2,3].

It is very difficult to define cultural tourism because of numerous and flexible definitions of the term culture. The history of the concept, as well as the expansion of its use in different areas, from ethnology and ethnography, through anthropology and sociology, to literature, points also to the different concepts of culture. Within various fields of humanities and social sciences, there is a serious disagreement concerning what exactly the term culture stands for. Since there is no unique definition, the term is multi-discursive, which means that it can be used in a multitude of different discourses [4]. In all the ways in which it is used, culture is, implicitly or explicitly, opposed to nature. All that people produce or do is culture and all that exists or is created without human intervention is part of the world of nature. The culture of a particular society comprises invisible aspects, beliefs, ideas and values which make up its content and visible aspects, objects, symbols and technologies which represent that content.

Let's suppose that culture, within the context of tourism, can be defined as a totality of material (the entire tourist infrastructure) and spiritual values (customs, lifestyle, tradition) that a community feels as its own unique lifestyle. If we consider culture within this context, that is, as a lifestyle of a specific community, social group or people, then cultural tourism, apart from consumption of cultural products from the past, also includes contemporary culture, that is, everyday practices and the lifestyle of the people in receptive destinations. Something that is a commonplace and everyday occurrence in one culture, in another culture may be new and exotic. Cultural tourism, therefore, is not made up solely of passive consumption, i.e. sightseeing and visiting historical sites, museums, paintings or theatre performances. An ever-increasing number of tourists are interested in *creative tourism* which consists of active participation in cultural activities, such as painting, photography, dance, cookery, etc. Smith [5] therefore proposes the following definition of cultural tourism:

'Passive, active and interactive inclusion in cultures and communities by means of which visitors acquire new experiences of an educational, creative and entertaining nature.' [5]

This definition is the result of the transition to more active and more interactive forms of cultural tourism, as well as the implication that education and entertainment are not mutually exclusive and that tourists simultaneously get in touch with several different cultures and

communities. The majority of cultural tourists are particularly interested in locations and the authenticity of cultural experience. For example, Smith [6] distinguishes *post-tourism* from cultural tourism. A post-tourist is aware that tourist experience is commodified and perceives it as a game; for such a tourist travel does not represent a search for self-fulfilment [7]. As opposed to post-tourists, cultural tourists are much more interested in interaction with local communities and their traditions. We can also talk about cultural tourism as a form of travel in which cultural tourists participate both as researchers and adventurers. This is especially true in relation to *tribal and ethnic tourism*, when tourists wish to visit the local population in their natural environment, which sometimes can be very remote and inaccessible (jungle, desert, etc.). On the other hand, Richards [8] believes that cultural tourists are more educated than average tourists and that they have a better understanding of the adverse impacts that tourism has on the local population, environment and culture.

In cultural tourism, the consumption of cultural resources is realised only when they are prepared as tourist attractions, when they are turned into tourism products and offered at the market for a specific price. Cultural resources are shaped and presented in three ways: 1) as cultural activities (sightseeing and visiting historical sites, towns, museums, galleries, theatres, concerts, exhibitions, events, etc.); 2) mechanically (in various documentaries, cinemas); 3) as goods to be sold (books, paintings, CDs, videos, handicraft, souvenirs, etc.). Attractive areas which are considered as potential tourist attractions and motives in cultural tourism are: archaeological sites and architecture (ruins, famous buildings, whole cities); museums, art, sculptures, crafts, galleries, festivals, different events, music and dance (classical, folklore, contemporary), drama, theatre, films, linguistic and literary studies (tours and events), religious celebrations, pilgrimages, the entire culture and subculture [9]. Cultural tourism is often referred to as an industry on the rise and the tourism sector as becoming increasingly versatile. It is, therefore, essential to examine some of the controversies associated with cultural tourism.

3 CONTROVERSIES ABOUT CULTURAL TOURISM

In the last years of the 20th century, cultural tourism emerged as an alternative form of tourism adequate to become an antithesis to conventional, mass tourism. Urban centres started to develop their own tourist offer based on physical elements of culture and associated experiences (museums, galleries, castles, forts, artists' houses). On the other hand, villages were redefined as places of consumption, where history and rural tradition took priority over modern agricultural production. A large number of destinations (urban and rural alike) started to compete in self-(re)production and promotion in the context of culture, where similar principles and mechanisms were often used. One of the consequences of such a development is the problem of serial reproduction or the so-called McGuggenheimization of culture, where every ability to create uniqueness ceases to exist. Rojek [7] points to the increase in the 'universal cultural space' providing its visitors with the same aesthetic and spatial references all over the world. The effect of this is the production of a large number of sterile and inflexible cultural tourist spaces, in which passive consumption dominates, as well as the use of well-known historical references.

Cultural tourism development and diversification has been accompanied by numerous debates regarding the nature of its development. Richards [10] for example believes that it is not true that cultural tourism generates larger income in a destination primarily due to a lower number of visitors of a better financial status. He states that there is no proof for this despite the fact that consumption habits of cultural tourists are somewhat different from those of

other tourists'. Secondly, Richards believes that the fact that cultural tourism represents the fastest growing segment at the tourism market is simply not true. He thinks that it is very difficult to define cultural tourism and that it does not represent a single, easily detectible market. In spite of the fact that culture may even represent a key motive for choosing a destination, cultural consumption has a very small share in the structure of overall consumption in that destination. In Venice, for example, tourists spend most money on accommodation (45%) and shopping (21%), whereas the amount of money spent on culture amounts to only 2%.

Smith and Robinson believe that contemporary cultural tourism has been following in the footsteps of the Grand Tour. Education, social reputation and human curiosity continue to represent the main motivational factors for travelling, but, nowadays, they are complemented by a certain number of other factors, such as low-budget airlines, growing number of museums, cultural attractions, festivals and cultural events, democratisation of cultural tourism which is accompanied by sophisticated marketing campaigns, and so on. Smith and Robinson emphasise that the majority of tourists still search for relaxation, warm climate and hedonistic pleasures, and that lying on the beach has never ceased to be the most popular form of holiday. However, it does not mean that individuals, who participate in mass tourism, are not interested in culture. In other words, cultural tourism is no longer exclusively limited to passive consumption of the sites associated with high or elite culture (historical sites, museums, monuments and other forms of iconic presentations or spectacles of a nation), but it also includes active participation in popular cultural attractions, sports, shopping, gastronomy and other forms of everyday human social practices in receptive destinations. Places of mass tourism also contain important cultural elements (e.g. the first contact with another culture in a new destination is usually the menu, a waiter or food in a restaurant), and it is popular culture itself, which as a part of the non-material culture, represents new, although often neglected, method of tourist product diversification [11].

Richards [10] believes that due to globalisation, mobility, transport, Internet and the mass media, cultural forms are easily accessible to tourists all over the world. Apart from tourists who travel all around the world to consume cultural resources, resources themselves are becoming increasingly mobile. Exhibitions go on world tours, the same musicals are performed on different continents, just like the new Guggenheim museums are being opened throughout the world. Swiss journalist and author Alain de Botton emphasises that we mainly tend to ignore everyday details which make our everyday environment as exciting, interesting and exotic as remote destinations. He believes that in the domicile environment it is also possible to find an equal quantity of cultural diversion as one finds by going on a holiday elsewhere, which implies that the patterns of consumption of cultural tourists are very similar to their patterns of consumption at home and that tourism is actually an extension of everyday life [10].

Classical cultural tourism is still tightly connected to the European model of passive consumption of historical sites and museums, while in the other parts of the world new forms of consumption of natural attractions, products of the traditional village life and gastronomy, that promotes the richness of the domestic cuisine and which is a blend of the local and imported culinary techniques, have been emerging. In order to attract a large number of visitors, tourist destinations develop specific marketing programmes and new cultural attractions (creative tourism, spreading of tourism to the polar area where the Arctic towns are offered in the market as places in which it is possible to revive and experience the exploration ventures of the early Polar Circle explorers, such as R.F. Scott, R. Amundsen and others) and the switch to popular culture and other forms of non-material heritage has been evident to diversify the cultural tourist product.

Cultural tourism can contribute to the protection of cultural traditions, as well as to the enrichment of the quality of life in urban and rural areas. Historians and protectors of cultural and historical heritage do not always look with optimism at the development of cultural tourism, primarily due to the lack of comprehensive research on socio-cultural and economic changes and the need to research the positive and negative effects that tourism has on the culture of a destination. However, despite pessimism because of potential negative effects of tourism on culture, there are also optimistic points of view regarding the promotion of cultural tourism as a tool for protection and conservation of the cultural heritage and local culture development. The income generated by cultural tourism is often used for protection and renewal of cultural and historical heritage and serves as support in the development of the local, traditional culture, which, in many destinations without tourism, would most probably be lost forever. Thanks to globalisation and technological development, tourism in general has become synonymous with culture because it has been oriented to satisfying human needs for diversity, acquisition of new cultural knowledge, practices and experiences.

Cultural tourism has been important for the expansion of cultural facilities, for the growth of tourism employment, and for the development of diverse tourism and cultural policies. In the past, cultural resources and the cultural tourist have largely been taken for granted, and this will have to change if the full advantages offered by cultural tourism development are to be realised.

4 DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Cultural tourism is one of the key determinants of the Croatian tourism development often at the forefront of the state's priorities. The Strategy of the Development of Cultural Tourism in Croatia was designed by the Institute for Tourism of Zagreb in 2003 and its implementation started in 2004. The scope of the strategy was to create a critical mass of well-presented, modernly interpreted and professionally promoted cultural-tourism products, which would contribute to the enrichment of visitors' satisfaction, creation of destinations rich in cultural-tourism offer and stimulation of domestic demand (Strategy of development of cultural tourism, [12]) The envisaged deadline for the implementation of the Strategy was four years during which the proper infrastructure was to be established and the encouragement of long-term development of cultural-tourism initiative in Croatia as well as the increase of quality of presentation and interpretation of existing cultural resources were to be achieved leading to the establishment of the adequate preconditions for the development of Croatia as a destination of cultural tourism. Five basic objectives of utmost importance for the development of cultural tourism in Croatia were set forth by the Strategy, namely:

1. Cultural tourism was to become the main strategic orientation. A critical mass of human resources possessing knowledge and skills for the development of modern cultural-tourism products was to be created.
2. A culture of partnership, strong organizational structure and a good flow of information was to be established.
3. Stable resources of financing the development of cultural tourism were to be secured, and
4. Cultural-tourism products at local, regional and national levels were to be created (Strategy of development of cultural tourism, 2003, p. 35).

According to the most prominent Croatian researches in the field [13,14] the best results have been achieved regarding the objectives 1 and 4. Cultural tourism has become one of the main strategic commitments thanks to the creation, implementation and enforcement of the Strategy, and due to systematic education offered to all interested parties. Furthermore, the Office of Cultural Tourism was established with the Croatian National Tourist Board in 2004. The main purpose of this office is to present Croatian cultural heritage to tourists in an acceptable and interesting way, and to create cultural-tourism products. It has a managerial role, and it should act as an intermediary between the Ministries of Culture and Tourism and Croatian National Tourist Board in the creation and promotion of all Croatian cultural and tourism projects. For this purpose, the government has secured regular financial resources allocated to the Office on a yearly basis.

Regarding the culture of partnership and the flow of information (objective 3) the conclusion is that in spite of the existence of a satisfactory flow of information there is an evident lack of cooperation between the state and the private sector, that is, inter- and intra-sectoral cooperation among various sectors.

Objectives 2 and 5 have been inadequately met. In spite of ongoing education of all interested stakeholders, Croatian cultural tourism is still short of human resources with the necessary skills and knowledge for the development of contemporary cultural-tourism products, mainly due to the lack of those who have expertise in cultural management and also because the meeting of this goal is a time consuming process. Furthermore, there is still no evidence of a significant or growing number of established cultural-tourism products at local, regional and national levels. Croatian cultural potentials are numerous, but so far the development results are modest in relation to opportunities, because of the lack of comprehensive planning and clearly defined objectives and priorities for development, particularly on regional and local levels.

The latest research on cultural tourism in Croatia was conducted in 2008 [15]. The aim of this research was to collect data regarding the characteristics of tourism demand and consumption of cultural attractions and events in Croatia. The research included 37 cultural attractions, out of which 16 cultural and historical sights, nine museums and galleries and 12 events, equally dispersed in coastal and continental parts of Croatia. Participants in research expressed a very low level of satisfaction regarding the availability of information about attractions/events prior to the departure time and the quality of their labelling (signalization) on the roads. The intermediate level of satisfaction was noted for the availability of information about the attractions/events in the area of sojourn and in regard to their quality and availability. Although the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the souvenir offer, 48% of them pointed out that the visit surpassed their expectations and 47% indicated that the visit was in line with their expectations. 20.4% of participants indicated that they were fond of exploring cultural and heritage sites and attractions during their vacation and 26.4% indicated that culture constituted the main reason for travelling to a particular destination. These facts may serve as a basis for making future decisions regarding the development of cultural-tourism products and their promotion and contribute to the development of a continuous research of demand for cultural-tourism products in Croatia. Therefore, to achieve the tasks and objectives referred to in the Strategy and make the Croatian cultural tourism come to life, it is necessary to do the following:

- educate coordinators of projects on cultural heritage management in a systematic manner
- limit or eliminate the centralisation and bureaucratisation of procedures for the

- implementation of a cultural-tourism projects,
- raise the level of awareness and knowledge of local people to new cultural and tourism projects,
 - find new, innovative ways of financing cultural and tourism projects through market, entrepreneurship, sponsorship, etc.
 - encourage the development of high quality and distinctive local cultural and tourism products
 - encourage the Office of Cultural Tourism to promote cultural tourism projects more aggressively and directly
 - strengthen the role of the state in providing the conditions for further development of cultural tourism through the integration of promotional programmes, adaptation of the adequate legislation and more thorough coordination with local authorities regarding the work on the existing projects and encouragement of new ones,
 - use more systematic market research to obtain data that might be used to improve and redirect the development of Croatian cultural tourism.

Despite the existence and implementation of the strategy of development of cultural tourism, cultural tourism in Croatia has been burdened with a certain number of problems, and the most obvious are: lack of recognisable cultural-tourism products, lack of cooperation between the sectors of culture and tourism and inadequate promotion.

Croatia is abundant in tangible and intangible cultural and tourism heritage. It boasts with numerous and unique Mediterranean coastal cities as well as the attractiveness of continental urban centres and traditional rural areas. A dazzling variety of natural and cultural resources and impressive sites under UNESCO's protection (the Plitvice Lakes, the Cathedral of St. James in Šibenik, Euphrasius Basilica in Poreč, the old towns of Trogir, Dubrovnik and Split with its Diocletian Palace, to name but a few) witness to the richness of the Croatian cultural heritage. Croatian cultural heritage is an exceptionally valuable resource in the Croatian tourism offer, as evidenced by the fact that 69% of tourists during their stay participate in a cultural event, although the main motivation for their arrival in Croatia is still summer sea and sun holidays [15].

However, it should be also kept in mind that the existence of all these attractions and sites does not automatically point to high levels of development of cultural tourism in a destination. It takes much more than this. All these potentials must be activated and made attractive for visitors as well as for the local population. Cultural-tourism products, as key components of cultural tourism contribute to the enhancement of a destination's image, they contribute to the growth of consumption, duration of stay and tourists' satisfaction, contributing in this way to a destination's sustainable development. Cultural tourism definitely represents a long-term competitive advantage of Croatian tourism as one of the most important economic sectors in Croatia.

5 CONCLUSION

The growth of cultural tourism can better be explained as a consequence of wider social and economic trends which mark either the period of 'late modernity' or 'postmodernity' (Harvey, 1989). Over the years tourism consumption patterns have changed dramatically. Tourism has developed from an elite pursuit to a basic leisure need of the masses, and arguably the world's biggest source of employment as tourism and cultural consumption have grown, the relationship between tourism and culture has also been transformed. Cultural consumption has

increased, and tourism is an increasingly important form of cultural consumption, encouraged and funded by local, national and supranational bodies. This reflects the change from an era when production drove consumption, to the consumer society where consumption drives production. The range of cultural products alone is vast, and the term 'cultural tourism' has been used to describe the consumption of art, heritage, folklore, and a whole range of other cultural manifestations by tourists. As the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' or 'popular' culture fade, so does the distinction between 'culture' and 'tourism' or 'everyday life', so that the scope of cultural tourism has expanded to include elements which previously would not have been considered 'cultural' (such as popular music, modern design or match museums). Cultural tourism is therefore changing, both in terms of the ways in which tourists consume culture, and in the way in which culture is presented for tourist consumption. Culture has become an essential element in tourism policies at all levels.

Numerous initiatives and measures have been taken in order to meet the problems of the development of Croatian cultural tourism. These measures definitely represent a very important encouragement for the creation and development of cultural and tourism projects, however, they haven't resulted in the permanent and systematic solution of existing problems. Today, tourism in general is characterised by the decentralisation of the tourist activities and this should be done with the cultural tourism as well. Cultural tourism should be developed at the local level and the government should be in charge of their mutual cooperation, fusion of cultural and tourism projects, promotion and encouragement, development and maintenance of the partnership between the public and the private sector.

The valid articulation and definition of the organizational structure of all bodies and agencies that should participate in the implementation of the Strategy has proved to be one of the central problems regarding the development of the Croatian cultural tourism products. Although since 2005 the state budget for cultural tourism has been increased, recognisable cultural-tourism products have not been developed yet, which makes it necessary to detect specific problems regarding this issue.

The effective implementation of the strategy requires a critical evaluation of actions that have been carried out so far, as well as to evaluate inter- and intra-sectoral cooperation, since it is essential that all stakeholders actively cooperate as equal partners in all processes of the implementation of the Strategy. This is crucial if Croatia wants to achieve a long-term strategic development of cultural tourism, whose ultimate goal is carefully developed cultural-tourism products of high quality.

REFERENCES

- [1] Douglas, N., Douglas, N. & Derrett, R., *Special Interest Tourism*, John Wiley and Sons: London, 2001.
- [2] Ravkin, R., *Sociološki aspekti turističke kulture*, Istarska naklada: Pula, 1983.
- [3] Jadrešić, V., *Turizam u interdisciplinarnoj teoriji i primjeni*, Školska knjiga: Zagreb, 2001.
- [4] Duda, D., *Kulturalni studiji: Ishodišta i problemi*, AGM: Zagreb, 2002.
- [5] Smith, M.K., *Issues in Global Cultural Tourism*, Routledge: London, 2009.
- [6] Smith, M.K., *Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies*, Routledge: London, 2003.
- [7] Rojek, C., *Ways of Escape, Modern Transformations in Leisure and Travel*, Macmillan: London, 1993.
- [8] Richards, G., *Cultural Tourism in Europe*, CABI, Wallingford, 1996.

- [9] Pančić Kombol, T., Kulturno nasljeđe i turizam, radovi zavoda za znanstveni rad HAZU, *Varaždin*, **16–17**, pp. 211–226, 2006.
- [10] Richards, G., *Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives*, Haworth: New York, 2007.
- [11] Smith, M., Macleod, N. & Hart Robertson, M., *Key Concepts in Tourist Studies*, Sage: London, 2010.
- [12] Strategy of development of cultural tourism., *From Tourism and Culture to Cultural Tourism*, Institute for Tourism, Zagreb, 2003.
- [13] Demonja, D., Institutional network of cultural tourism. In *Ethnology and Cultural Tourism, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences*, eds. T.P. Les & T. Pletenac, University of Zagreb, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Zagreb, pp. 11–15, 2006.
- [14] Sršen, M. The role of the croatian national tourist board in cultural tourism. In T. P. Leš & T. Pletenac (Eds.) *Ethnology and Cultural Tourism, 17. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences*, eds. T.P. Les & T. Pletenac, University of Zagreb, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Zagreb, 2006.
- [15] Tomljenović, R. & Marušić, Z., *Attitudes and Consumption of Cultural Attractions and Events in Croatia, Tomas Cultural Tourism 2008*, Institute for Tourism, Zagreb, 2009.