ELENA RUDAN, M. Sc.
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Opatija, University of Rijeka, Croatia

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN SMALL HISTORICAL TOWNS

PRELIMINARY COMMUNICATION

The development of cultural tourism in small historical Croatian towns did not have a significant importance until these last ten years. Small towns were independent units for themselves, left to the political decisions of the municipalities or cities, which generally did not recognize the true value of small urban environments for the development of tourism. Most of the small towns were left to influences of past times, with unsettled proprietary relations and poorly maintained buildings, with unacceptable upgrading and building within the boundaries of historical entities, and with the unacceptable standards of modern life. All of this prevented the normal development of small towns. The tourists’ growing interest to learn about the cultural and historical heritage is a result of education and an improved standard of living. The cultural and historical heritage of small towns, which is poorly represented and promoted, remains an insufficiently used resource in the tourist offer. The development of cultural tourism must not in any way disturb the balance of the social and economic living conditions of the small towns and it has to preserve their cultural identity. In the process of globalization, it is necessary to evaluate all resources of the cultural heritage and to create new possibilities for the creation of a tourist product. As a result of the abundance of cultural and historical heritage (primarily the way of life and the creativity of some past times), it is possible to develop cultural tourism as a form of economic and social interest. What is important for the further development is the destination management’s willingness to include the resources of historical towns into the offer of the destination. In the whole system of sustainable development, it is necessary to rationally use the quality elements of cultural and historical heritage. It is necessary to adequately protect and evaluate such heritage and it is important to formulate a strategy for a possible further sustainable development.

Keywords: small historical towns, cultural tourism, tourist destination, destination management

INTRODUCTION

Small historical towns in Croatia are nowadays an important cultural and historical touristic resource. In certain areas they are the creators of history and the creators of interesting legends. Their values have to be researched, evaluated, prepared, preserved and processed in a marketing manner, so that these well-managed resources can become the true bearers of a possible further development of cultural tourism.
Cultural tourism in small historical towns must not be an activity for itself. It has to become a quality upgrade of a maintained, protected and evaluated urban environment.

1. CULTURAL TOURISM

In this time of general globalization and unification, the importance of cultural tourism is growing faster than fancy trends. Cultural tourism is not just a current whim. It has been developing for centuries - from the departures of the first pilgrims until this modern time where the discovering of identity and uniqueness has become a common phenomenon. Uniqueness and specificity that are far from the hurried everyday life, actually opens new possibilities for the exploration and the defining of the meaning of cultural tourism in these last twenty years.

The defining of cultural tourism reveals the complexity of this phenomenon. There are many ways to define cultural tourism depending on different aspects and standpoints of different scientists. We can define cultural tourism as: “...all journeys that include visits to cultural attractions outside of a person’s place of residence, aiming at the gaining of new knowledge and experience which satisfies the cultural needs of an individual.” We can also explain it through the definition from the document “The strategy for the development of cultural tourism” as follows: “...peoples’ visitations outside their place of residence, which are fully or partially motivated by an interest for history, art, heritage or life-style of a locality, region, group or institution.”

According to the author Jelinčić, regardless of which definition will be used, all of them incorporate material or immaterial forms of the culture of a certain destination which give the tourist an “atmosphere” or an “experience” of the chosen destination.

Cultural tourism is developing through different forms, but in two directions. In the first place it can be a separate form of tourist offer. Secondly it can be an addition to some other form of tourism. This primarily depends on the preferences of the tourist as the consumer of the cultural tourist attraction i.e. on the level of his interest for this form of tourist products.

Culture can be a primary or secondary travelling motive and it can be an additional element of a product in mass tourism. This means that the use of cultural resources is different and so the offer has to be prepared in different ways, in different forms and for different needs. Culture becomes a tourist attraction only after it has been specifically shaped and offered on the market at a specific rate.

In this global accelerated development, the distinctiveness of an offer grows in accordance with the development of the image of a destination, and in accordance with the generation of competitive advantages. The cultural and historical heritage is very often included in different promotional materials, but it is in itself not adequately

---

1 Tomljenović, R., “Kulturni turizam”, in Hrvatski turizam: plavo, bijelo, zeleno, Zagreb, Institut za turizam, 2006, 122
2 Strategija razvoja kulturnog turizma, Vlada Republike Hrvatske, Zagreb, Ministarstvo turizma, 2003, 5
3 Jelinčić, D. A., Abeceda kulturnog turizma, Zagreb, Meandarma, Meandar, 2008, 46
4 Pančić Kombol, T., “Kulturno nasljede i turizam”, Rudovi Zavoda za znanstveni rad HAZU Varaždin, No. 16-17, 2006, 216
5 Pančić Kombol, T., op. cit. 223
prepared to be a properly managed attraction. The cultural and historical heritage which can be found in Croatian promotional materials only to embellish its pages is meaningless without proper management and without available information about it. Tourist agencies offer city-tours as an addition for tourists who come to stay in some hotel or private accommodation. Information about the city is generally scarce, without concrete and clear promotional solutions or manifestation-programs etc.

“The strategy for development of cultural tourism” from 2004 has certainly contributed to the development of cultural tourism in these last several years. This strategy clearly emphasizes the importance of cultural tourism and the possible further development of tourist destinations in this direction.

At the question in the Tomas-survey 6 about which attractions tourists have visited or intend to visit during their stay on their vacation in Croatia, most have decided on cultural and historical notabilities of secular (65%) or sacral (64%) character. This also includes small historical towns as an important element of the historical heritage. According to this same survey, most of the “cultural-tourists” are foreign visitors (62%), while domestic visitors make 38% of the total demand for cultural tourism. Most of the cultural attractions and happenings are visited by domestic visitors who arrive from the immediate surroundings – 44% of these visitors come from the same or from the neighbour county. 7 Domestic visitors show a great interest to learn about the material but also immaterial cultural heritage.

According to figures quoted by the World Tourism Organization, 20% of tourist visits in Europe respond to cultural motivations, whilst 60% of European tourists are interested in cultural discovery during their trips. Moreover, heritage and culture have become a component in almost 40% of all international trips. 8

A cultural tourist attraction should also have its dynamic component i.e. the tourist has to become an active participant in some touristic activities (e.g. the organization of international arts workshops for children in Mošćenice – Mošćenički pinel – where children show their impression of a historical town through their own artistic creation; school of the Glagolitic script; creative workshops etc.).

The most important thing to discuss is how to interpret the cultural, historical or artistic contents in a touristic manner and to thereby make them really interesting and available for different segments of potential visitors. 9 Here the accent is placed on the level of education and the age of the visitors, because by using a different interpretation the same contents can be made attractive to different segments of the demand.

Cultural tourism, being one of the selective forms of tourism, can help to strengthen the economic significance of small historical towns and to create a higher quality of living in these towns. In the course of touristic development, it very often comes to disruptions of the harmony of life and authenticity, and even to the destruction of the cultural and historical heritage itself. Culture and tourism are connected and it is necessary to find ideal development solutions in order to avoid the negative effects of development.

---

7 Tomas trendovi, op. cit. 150-151
8 “Cultural and Heritage Tourism – International”, Travel & Tourism Analyst, November, No. 20, 2004, 1
2. SMALL HISTORICAL TOWNS AND TOURISM

Big cities have a longtime touristic tradition and develop their cultural attractions to attract new visitors. The interest for visiting big cities is growing especially in these last two decades. The vast number of tourists visiting big cities (Venice, Paris, Rome, etc.) also has some negative effects on the population and the city itself.

The development of city-tourism is based on cultural heritage and large and special events and exhibitions, as well as on business trips and trade (i.e. shopping) from the very beginning. While big cities have a much broader spectrum of possible attractions and elements for tourist visitations (e.g. cultural and historical heritage, conferences, fairs, shopping, museums, festivals etc.), small historical towns have to find their own place in their authenticity through their unique historical, economic and sustainable concept.

Small historical towns in Croatia (e.g. Mošćenice, Lovran, Kastav, Veprinac etc.) are for the most part still searching for their own place in the tourist offer. It is impossible to conceive of any further economic and touristic development of these authentic historical values, in a situation of poorly managed local government and self-government, where there is insufficient investment in the maintenance of buildings and the solving of infrastructural problems, and where there are no strategic plans for economic and touristic development and for renovation or revitalization.

Small historical towns in Croatia are in different conditions. Some of them are not adequately preserved (collapsed buildings, destroyed facades etc.), some are devastated by all kinds of building extensions (e.g. building of additional floors, penetrations of city walls, building of balconies, terraces etc.), and some are changed for embellishment (e.g. paving of old stone stairs with tiles etc.). While there is no life at all in some towns, others have preserved their originality which has not been disrupted by any spatial interventions. It is quite clear that the life through different historical periods has left its trace, and that the changes in the standard and quality of living brought some positive, but in some cases also some negative changes which are affecting the value of the historical urban units. It is necessary that all further urban-activities are planned with the goal to preserve the heritage.

The small historical towns in the County of Primorje-Gorski Kotar can be noted as an example. According to the authors Urodi and Črnjar, many small historical towns there have turned into impersonal agglomerations because their closer and further surroundings (which they have previously been functionally and aesthetically connected with into one entity), have now been completely changed. Small historical settlements in the County of Primorje-Gorski Kotar that are protected as cultural monuments, and that once used to be cultural, economic and spiritual centers, are now abandoned and uncared for, or just “devastated” by new inadequate contents.

\[10\] Pančić Kombol, T., “Turizam hrvatskih gradova”, 2. znanstveni i stručni skup Hrvatska u europskom turizmu: Opatija, Hotelijerski fakultet, november 15-17, 1995, 186

The development of small historical towns is a complex process and it depends on the scientific, cultural and touristic strategy and policy on the local level as well as on the level of the according institutions in the government and even on an international level.

Small towns in the 21st century have to develop tourism through sustainable development and by respecting ecological standards. There are very few historical towns in Croatia which manage to develop tourism (through building of accommodation facilities, selling of autochthonic products, oenological and gastronomical offer etc.) with all the population being gainfully occupied. It is natural that the need for a better standard of living, the need for further education and for development of one’s career, often leads the individual into bigger cities or even to other countries. The life in historical cities is thereby abandoned and its population moves into bigger urban centers, which offer more possibilities and an easier life to the modern man. As a consequence, the older population is left behind in the small town. With such a population structure, any further economic activities start to cease.

Programs which could be realized in small historical towns should be able to unite the modern way of living with the traditional historical towns i.e. to unite all who are interested in creating improved values.

Small historical towns which are connected with its cultural landscape carry their own identity which contributes to their distinction in the tourist destination but also outside of it. The development of a small town and its surroundings can be directed in a qualitative manner only if the following is respected: historical continuity, urban characteristics and the character of these relations.

The identities of small Croatian historical towns should become a managed tourist attraction upon which the development of cultural tourism will be built on.

3. SMALL HISTORICAL TOWNS AND THE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM

Small historical towns can be the bearer of a stronger development of a destination’s cultural tourism. Towns which have an emphasized historical component are a basis for a tourist attraction. Creating distinguishable and complex tourist product can benefit the destination as well as the population of small towns. The development of tourism must not be based on the disruption of the continuity and the quality of life in them.

12 A cultural landscape is a topographically defined area, an existential space with pronounced identity, i.e. it is a spatial entity which: - includes a space which came into existence through a joint activity of human and nature and which displays a historical duration (continuously or interrupted); - it is composed of natural elements and of human intervention in space (settlements, communications, agricultural and other activities).


The following factors are necessary for the development of tourism in small historical towns:

- protected cultural and historical heritage of the town
- traffic connections
- appropriate infrastructure
- people who can lead the touristic development, and people who will be the bearers of economic activities in the tourist offer
- the development of tourism has to be incorporated into the town’s and the local self-government’s strategic development plans as their integral part
- the preservation and restoration of historical structures, facades and spaces
- a system of restoration- and protection- measures according to the Act on the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Goods and the Space Planning and Building Act and according to other legal acts and regulations
- small historical towns have to be considered in the context of their surroundings and the complex spatial system – the cultural landscape
- creation of a program (parts of the historical urban unit, the sacral heritage, manifestations, workshops, authentic oenological and gastronomic offer, concerts, art colonies etc.)
- marketing of the tourist product of the small historical town

Touristic movements in the cities have always also a negative side to it. The same is true for small historical towns where there is a constant fear of tourism disrupting the harmony of living and the town’s future. Tourism can bring an inadequate number of people into a town. These people can disrupt the value of the urban entity through their movement, their habits, desires and economic activities.

In the tourism of a receptive country, it is the authenticity and the originality of the traditional expression which is the factor that ensures the quality of the tourist offer, making it different from any other.  

Cultural tourism cannot be an activity for itself. It has to be an upgrade to a quality life in a small historical entity.

4. THE POPULATION OF SMALL TOWNS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM

The quality of life in small historical towns should not be disrupted, because the domestic population, who has to be the bearer of economic development in small towns, can thereby be lost.

The local population perceives the buildings of the cultural heritage as object from the neighbour’s courtyard (something completely natural and logical) positioned exactly where it should be and where the previous generations have imagined and built them.

---

15 Gredičak, T., „Kulturna baština i gospodarski razvitak Republike Hrvatske“, Ekonomski pregled Vol. 60, No. 3-4, 2009, 214
The inhabitants of small towns and villages who live and care for them, can acquire new knowledge by learning the historical effects on the urban form. That will enable them to make well-founded decisions about the future of the land, the buildings and the place/town. The “tissue” of small towns (their historical buildings, facades and areas), are characteristics which are evaluated as sources of their cultural significance and sources of applied value. The preservation and strengthening of these characteristics should be stimulated.16

The active population of small historical towns could certainly gain certain benefits from cultural tourism through preservation and presentation projects – indirectly at first - through the fitting up and arrangement of the infrastructure, the visual identity of the streets, squares, and facades and other public and private areas and spaces. The direct benefits have to be emphasized - the local population can generate material benefits through various modes of commercializing different spaces and the cultural and historical heritage (opportunity for employment, souvenir shops, ateliers, offering of specific oenological and gastronomic products, production of autochthonous products and souvenirs, demonstrations of old crafts, craftsman workshops, building of appropriate accommodation capacities, etc.).

The presence of tourist in an urban and living entity, certainly brings about positive influences (e.g. it arouses a certain pride about one’s own past and tradition, satisfaction with the prosperity of the place and its inhabitants, rise of self-confidence etc.) and negative influences (e.g. the feeling of someone occupying their environment, antipathy against tourists-strangers in their own environment because of traffic and noise resulting from the constant touristic movements in a closed urban entity etc.).

Krippendorf17 emphasized that tourists and the local population find themselves in completely different, even opposite positions. What is freedom and pleasure for one side is a burden and labour for the other side. Leisure is colliding with work, the need for rest with the need for survival. What is money for one side is the bread for the other side.

In small historical towns, where there are close contacts between tourists and the local population, there are bound to be negative and positive human relations and emotions.

5. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM

In the development of cultural tourism in small historical towns, destination management plays the most important role. Destination management 18 has to be perceived as touristic activities that engage local interests and produce rational business relations with the bearers of the tourist offer in order to produce a destination product.

According to the actual legislation of the Republic of Croatia, the local government and the self-government (communities, cities, counties), on whose territory

16 Turner, P., Izjava o stajalištu o malim europskim gradovima, Ecovast Europsko vijeće za sela i male gradove, svibanj 2009.
17 Krippendorf, J., Putujuće čovječanstvo, Zagreb, SNL, Zavod za istraživanje turizma, 1986, 68
18 Maguš, D., Destinacijski menadžment: modeli i tehnike, Opatija, Fakultet za turistički i hotelski menadžment, 2008, 2
the small historical towns are located, hold the largest influence. According to existing laws\textsuperscript{19}, the mayor (or the community chief) or the county ruler is also the chairman of the tourist board. Together with the tourist-board of the place, community or town, they determine the basic guidelines for the development of all types of tourism, with the goal to achieve a better economic development of the whole community/town and the entire population. Tourist boards also have an important role on the levels of the community, town or county. Without strategic and political initiatives from the local community, it is impossible to perform research, protection, presentation, education and implementation of small historical towns into the tourist offer of a destination and Croatia in general. The Act on Tourist Boards\textsuperscript{20} states that the common goal is the development of consciousness about the importance and the economic, social and other effects of tourism; about the need and importance of preserving and improving all the elements of the tourist product of a certain area, and especially the environmental protection and the protection of the natural and cultural heritage according to sustainable development.

Taking the example of small historical towns, we can emphasize the following basic tasks of destination management:

1. ensure and organize a research phase of the historical town (a major part of the cultural and historical heritage in Croatia is researched insufficiently or on an inadequate quality level)
2. organize an inventory of cultural goods inside historical urban units
3. determine the touristic turnover and the towns potential i.e. define the status of the tourist attraction
4. preserve, protect and reconstruct the goods which can be used in the tourist offer
5. determine the strategic touristic development plan for a historical town
6. present the significance of the cultural and historical heritage of small historical towns to the population, to the tourism and catering industry and to children
7. define the carrying capacity of the town
8. develop a marketing concept
9. provide traffic connections of the small historical town with the surrounding places
10. provide the funds for the revitalization and protection of the historical units (through public private partnerships, foundations etc.)
11. organize the accommodation offer (depending on the potentiality and capacity of the urban unit) and an autochthonic gastronomic offer using various incentives
12. organization of different manifestations (traditional, religious and other festivities) and organization of professional guiding trough the town
13. ensure promotional activities through different media (first of all the internet, TV and other)
14. improve the sales activities concerning the tourist product.

\textsuperscript{19} Zakon o turističkim zajednicama i promicanju hrvatskog turizma, article 18., Narodne novine, No. 152, 24.12.2008.
\textsuperscript{20} Zakon o turističkim zajednicama i promicanju hrvatskog turizma, article 9., Narodne novine, No. 152, 24.12.2008.
CONCLUSION

Small historical towns with their historical, urban and economic values, have their own authenticity and distinction which gives them their identity in the total Croatian offer.

Each small historic town is a unit by itself and as such, is special in its surroundings. Cultural tourism in small Croatian historical towns can become an essential element of further development, not only for the urban unit but for the whole destination where it is located.

The destination management has to plan the touristic development of small historical towns strategically, and in a way that takes into account that the authenticity, the cultural and historical heritage and the harmony and quality of living of the local population is not obstructed.

REFERENCES

23. www.ecovast.org