

STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE FACTORS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL-HISTORICAL TOURISM IN BULGARIA

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Abstract

The article examines the conditions and factors of developing cultural tourism in Bulgaria. The author proofs the point that the cultural tourism is not only different from the traditional tourist product, but is also specific, due to its role of formation of individual users. Based on a survey from among 115 real users of this type of tourism product, are defined the major factors of cultural tourism in Bulgaria. By using the scientifically based methodology, the factors are ranged. Three main factors are determined: cultural and historical sites, presentation of handicrafts and other local activities, presence of pristine nature. Indicated are the factors which discourage the potential users of cultural tourism. Based on the study and analysis, is concluded that Bulgaria has all the necessary conditions and prerequisites for developing cultural tourism. Formulated are specific conclusions and practical recommendations.

Key words: cultural-historical tourism, factors, sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

Culture, history and archaeology are fundamental elements upon planning and creating of a tourist product designed for both the domestic and the international market. They allow the relevant party that has genuine uniqueness and identity to be clearly identified by potential visitors and by operators in the tourist sector thus provoking tourist demand. Tourism is a priority branch of the Bulgarian economy, forming a significant part of the gross domestic product of the country. [4]

The cultural and historical heritage of a country plays a major role in promoting its reputation and in directing public's interest in recognizing, learning and obtaining fuller and lasting perception and understanding of its values.

If „Rural tourism generates additional income for rural families, creating jobs and reducing unemployment, reduced direct emigration from rural areas, contributes to the development of new activities and the diversification of the economy” [3], cultural and historical tourism not only differs in

content from the traditional tourist product but it is specific because of its role in the personal formation of its users. The use of a certain tourist product turns into a part of the process of formation and affirmation of the individual identity and personality. In this sense, cultural and historical tourism tends to become a positive necessity in the process of forming the individual. All this brings new meaning and new elements into the content of the tourist product.

From an economic point of view, cultural and historical tourism retains its ability to develop even in periods of stagnation of the economy, contributing to economic development, which makes it even more necessary. Therefore, tourism services in the rural areas are able to support local population and communities in developing economic diversity. [7]

Bulgaria is a country with great potential for development of tourism, based on the cultural and historical heritage. This heritage has a vivid identity due to the immediate interaction between cultural, historical, archaeological and natural resources. Connected in a single framework, these resources form a genuine uniqueness and specificity that makes them a factor in promoting tourist attraction and

hence factors for economic development. ".... exploring the authentic and typical landscape of as well as the exploration of the regional cultural, natural, archaeological and historical capital" [5], is also an element of the content of rural tourism. The unification of Bulgaria's cultural, historical, archaeological and natural resources makes the country attractive and competitive tourist destination. Cultural tourism in Bulgaria has a great potential. It is a successor of Thracians, Romans, Slavs, Byzantines, Protobulgarians, Latins, Ottomans. Many ethnic groups found their second home here. [6]

Bulgaria has rich and various archaeological sites. Archaeological discoveries on the territory of the country show the existence of a cultural layout from prehistory to modern history. Conservation and valorisation of discovered areas and found objects are a strategically important prerequisite for the regional development of a tourist activity.

The main types of cultural and historical resources with a statute of cultural monuments are archaeological, architectural, religious and cult buildings and sites, ethnographic museums, historical sites and places, reserves and other cultural and historical values. They present an interest from a tourist point of view and they are the object or the purpose of a visit by tourists.

Archaeological monuments are objects, facilities or ancient funerals preserved on the ground, underground or under water. They show the economic, social and cultural development of the area or the region during the different historical eras and they are the only source of information about prehistoric societies and civilizations. Archaeological monuments from Antiquity, Thracian, Hellenic and Roman age are coins, ceramics, household items, helmets, knee-caps, etc.

A significant part of the traditional material culture is occupied by the architectural and construction heritage. It is a bearer of local, regional and national features and provokes undoubtedly interest to both foreign and Bulgarian tourists. The name "Revival house" is a term for the different types of dwellings built on the Bulgarian lands during the Renaissance (18th and 19th centuries). In the

different regions of the country due to a number of peculiarities - mountainous, semi-mountainous or plain terrain conditions, availability of different building material, habits and traditions of the population, different types of Renaissance houses were built. Churches and monasteries are the subject of tourist visits not only as cult buildings. Many of them attract tourists with their unique architecture, frescoes and carvings. Periodic and episodic events include congress events, exhibitions and fairs, shows and festivals, ethnographic celebrations and festivals.

All these cultural and historical monuments in Bulgaria generate profit for the tourist sector of the country. They contribute to the formation of tourist products which meet the more diversified and demanding needs of the visitors.

Almost the entire territory of Bulgaria with its millennial layering of cultural and historical sites creates opportunities for tourist adaptation. There are over 1,220 monuments of national importance in the country. Particularly of high value are the reserves - monuments of culture. They are distinguished by a significant number (49 in total), wide geographic scope and include: 22 architectural and historical monuments of culture; 23 historical and archaeological reserves, including the Thracian tomb, Sveshtari and the Madara Rider (under the auspices of UNESCO); 3 architectural-archaeological including the old part of the town of Nessebar (under the auspices of UNESCO) and a historical reserve (near the town of Svishtov). The cultural and historical heritage includes many architectural and ethnographic sites: two open ethnographic complexes ("Etara" and Zlatograd complex), whole villages formed as architectural reserves - Etar and Bozhentsi near the town of Gabrovo, the old part of the town of Nessebar, the old part of the city of Plovdiv with the ancient Roman theater, the old part of the town of Veliko Tarnovo, the village of Arbanassi near the town of Veliko Tarnovo, etc., a museum network of over 200 museums, including art galleries and a large number of Christian religious sites - churches and monasteries.

The largest territorial concentration (over 100) of monuments of national importance in 3 districts - Veliko Tarnovo, Plovdiv and Sofia represents 17.8% of the total number of monuments. [2] "The study of Northern Bulgaria identified 514 sites of cultural and historical value, important for the development of tourism". [1] A lot of sites are concentrated in the central and southern parts of Veliko Tarnovo region and in Gabrovo region. Another significant group of cultural and historical monuments is in Shumen region.

For tourism development the most valuable are the parts of the mountain Stara Planina, Shumensko, some territories in the Northwest region, because there is a unique combination and complementary anthropogenic and natural resources. However, the level of use of anthropogenic resources in these areas is lower than in the Black Sea and southern Bulgaria.

Historical and archaeological heritage, dating back thousands of years has destined Bulgaria for a well-deserved role in world history. Medieval and Roman traces still can be seen in the modern and cosmopolitan reality of the city of Sofia, in picturesque and dynamic cities like Plovdiv and Stara Zagora and many other Bulgarian cities. The total richness and uniqueness of Thracian towns in Perperikon, Kazanlak and others is inimitable; the Roman towns of Nicopolis ad Istrum, Nove and Ulpia Trayana; the medieval Bulgarian capitals Pliska and Preslav, the towns of the Ottoman rule Rousse, Shumen, Silistra and the city of Varna.

The legacy of the smaller centers, the atmosphere of the internal Bulgarian territories: from the Rhodopes mountain to Strandzha mountain and from the Rila-Pirin massif to the Black Sea represents a territorial dispersed collection. It shows the old constructive methods, national and regional traditions, folklore and crafts, culinary and antique wines and creates a unique and genuine atmosphere and experience.

Anthropogenic tourist resources have two essential functions – to attract tourists and to enrich the culture by giving emotional attitude during their stay in the certain destination.

They can be divided into the following categories: historical and archaeological monuments; cultural and ethnographic sites; religious sites and events; conference, sports and other events.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In 2017, a survey (*The survey covers the following sectors: 1) accommodation and meals; 2) historical and archaeological sites; 3) spa, spa and wellness centers; 4) environment; 5) sports; 6) cultural traditions and gastronomy*) was conducted to collect information on the opinion and attitude of leading experts from the tourism industry and from Bulgarian and foreign tourists towards the historical, architectural and archaeological sites visited in Bulgaria.

115 survey forms were completed and submitted correctly. The survey has the following main objectives: (1) Defining and ranking of the factors that attract Bulgarian and foreign tourists to the cultural, historical and archaeological sites as well as the image and attitude of the leading specialists from the tourist industry; (2) Identification of the factors that impede the process of development of cultural and historical tourism and their classification; (3) Identification of actions to be taken.

The following indicators are used: total assessment of the factors; importance of the individual factor in the overall result. Answers to the survey rank the individual factor in a specific place (1 to 8). The total number of replies is 8. The factor receiving eight points becomes the first one. The factor that received 7 points goes to second place, and so on. The calculated total result is divided by the number of respondents and an average score is obtained. It is divided by the sum of the scores of all the factors to calculate the importance with which the individual factor participates in the overall assessment. In Tables 1 and 2, the individual factors are ranked according to their importance.

Based on the survey are defined the factors that attract tourists. The following attracting factors were selected:

1) Cultural and historical sites: monasteries (Rila, Troyan, Bachkovo monasteries, etc.), churches, ethnographic complexes (Zlatograd, Etara), national museums, regional museums, sites of the cultural heritage of the Thracians like Mezek tomb, sites from the Roman epoch in the city of Plovdiv, the rock sanctuaries Tatul and Perperikon in the Eastern Rhodopes and others.

2) Presentation of handicrafts and other local activities: folklore events of national and local importance (village of Rozhen, village of Smilyan, the town of Koprivshtitsa, the town of Gabrovo, the town of Troyan, etc.). During the summer months, a number of festivals and other similar events take place in the seaside towns and cities, in the city of Burgas - international folklore festival, song competition "Bourgas and the Sea"; in the city of Varna - music festival "Varna Summer"; in the town of Kavarna - jazz festival; Varna International Film Festival "Love Is madness"; in the resort complex "Sunny Beach" international festival of popular song "The Golden Orpheus", in the town of Sozopol - art festival "Apolonia"; wine tasting, introducing traditional Bulgarian cuisine and many more.

3) Pristine nature: The parks: Strandzha, Bulgarka, Rodopi, Rila, Pirin, Ropotamo, other nature parks and reserves of great biodiversity - birds, wild animals (bears), plant species (orchids, etc.), natural landmarks and typical rural landscapes.

4) New and well-organized facilities for various events (congresses, conferences and exhibitions), well-developed infrastructure.

5) Balneological centers with mineral water with different temperature and content of salts and minerals - Hissariya, Velingrad, Devin, Sandanski, Kyustendil, Sapareva Banya, Mineralni Bani Haskovo, Mineralni Bani Stara Zagora, etc.

6) Water parks, opportunities for practicing extreme sports such as rafting, climbing, etc., mountain hiking trails, orienteering, mountaineering, mountain biking, walking through nature parks and reserves, etc. sports activities.

7) Entertainment offered by discos, night bars, clubs, etc.

8) Possibility to hunt in hunting reserves (big and small wild game), fishing, collection of mushrooms, herbs, etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondents of the survey rank the factors as follows: in the brackets are listed the next attraction factor and the relative share, the percentage of respondents who placed the factor in the relevant place in the overall order of importance. (Table 1) First, 25.80% (2nd place, 15.01%), the respondents (potential and actual consumers) place the "pristine nature" factor. 20.27% of the respondents (3rd place, 13.56%) place first "new and well-organized bases". 13.82% (4th place, 13.31%) place the factor "getting to know the traditional handicrafts, folklore, lifestyle; typical cuisine, learning recipes, making drinks, home-made products and quiet and relaxing atmosphere. 13.82% (7th place, 8.78%) place the factor "availability of spa centers with mineral water with different temperature and salt and minerals content". 6.91% of respondents (1st place, 21.39%) put the motif "opportunity to visit cultural, historical and architectural landmarks, religious monuments"; 6.45% of respondents (5th place, 12.20%) are attracted in the first place by "quest for pleasant experiences, entertainment offered by discos, night bars, etc.". 6.45% of respondents (6th place, 10.98%) rank first "Opportunities for practicing extreme sports, participating in hiking tours, orientation, mountaineering, mountain biking, riding, walking through nature parks and reserves, etc. 6.45% of the respondents (8th place, 4.86%) place first the opportunity for hunting, fishing, purchasing environmentally friendly products, fresh fruits, vegetables, animal products, etc., berries, mushrooms and herbs, etc." (Table 2) The development of cultural and historical tourism is to a small extent dependent on economic cycles such as stagnation, upsurge, crisis. According to the profile of an average typical tourist user who has an average-high income, the user generally does not reduce their demand for this type of tourist product even at a time of economic stagnation or crisis.

The interviewed people have identified the most attractive geographic regions in Bulgaria in terms of tourist development. The results of the conducted survey allow us to make the following analysis:

In order to promote the cultural and historical heritage as attracting factors for tourist demand, it is necessary in each individual territory for the local community to recognize and rediscover the values of the territory, to preserve the cultural and historical assets of the region. On this basis should be selected the main theme (mission) on which concepts for different tourist offers can be formulated.

The most attractive areas for cultural and historical tourism are divided into several directions and areas:

More than 45% of the respondents believe that the Bulgarian Black Sea coast is the richest tourist resource. It is the most valuable territory to be preserved and supported mostly by means of regulatory measures and strict control over the construction in order to avoid further deterioration of its condition. The greatest interest on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast is represented by the following cultural and historical sites: Pomorie monastery "St. Georgi"; Aladzha monastery; the old bishopry in Nessebar; the churches "St. Ivan the Baptist", "St. Stephan", "All-Being (Pantocrator)", "St. Ivan Neosvetni" and "St. Paraskeva" which are also located in Nessebar; the church "St. Virgin Mary" in Sozopol. According to respondents, the most visited cities are Veliko Tarnovo, Plovdiv, Sofia, Rousse, etc. and other places offering not only cultural and historical tourism but other types of tourism, too (such as spa/balneological products) - Hissariya, Velingrad, Sandanski, Kyustendil, Sapareva Banya and others.

Territorial locations of cultural and historical resources are mainly in larger cities and settlements - architectural monuments and well preserved Renaissance architecture in Sofia, Plovdiv, Koprivshtitsa, Veliko Tarnovo, Nessebar, etc., a large number of archaeological sites in Plovdiv, Veliki Preslav, Kardzhali, Nessebar, Kazanlak and others.

The development of cultural and historical tourism has real opportunities and prospects in the following areas: Bulgarian Black Sea Coast - the development of cultural tourism should be sought in complementing recreative offers and offers outside the summer season; Strandzha Mountain - ecological and cultural sectors thanks to natural, historical - cultural and landscape resources; Rhodope Mountains - diversification of winter offers and decrease of seasonality through integration of cultural, historical and ethnographic resources, Perperikon - a very attractive historical center (with a great contribution to the valorisation of the whole territory); the old capitals of Bulgaria - increasing the intangible content of the cultural supply - integrating the existing sites with expositions and exhibitions, products of other types of tourism, the valley of the Thracian kings - popularizing and valorising the significant historical resources of the Thracian civilization, preserved national traditions, events and services; the city of Plovdiv - cultural heritage directly related to the national identity of Bulgarians, increase of the intangible content of tourist supply; towns of Ruse and Pleven - potential for development of domestic and international tourism; the valorisation of the Danube River as a natural connecting axis throughout the territory; Stara Zagora and Sliven - a tourist destination mainly for Bulgarian tourists. Rhodopi, Rila and Pirin Mountains, the Central Stara Planina Mountains as well as the rivers Maritsa, Struma, Mesta, Danube, Arda, Ropotamo and other rivers have the greatest number of votes.

Factors that impede the development of cultural and historical tourism in Bulgaria

These factors are related to the insufficient development of transport infrastructure; lack of adequate leisure activities; low qualification of human resources employed in the tourist sector, poor quality of information tourist services (e.g. lack of a calendar to indicate events and happenings).

The main conclusions referring to the factors impeding the development of cultural and historical tourism in Bulgaria and for which priority actions need to be taken can be summarized as follows:

1. Factors for which the public sector is responsible, especially transport infrastructure and public transport, are critical for the development of cultural and historical tourism. Special attention should be paid to the infrastructure development.

The development of sustainable cultural and historical tourism as a tool for socio-economic growth is closely related to initiatives to improve accessibility, transport links and communications at national, regional and local level. Existing road, port and airport infrastructures are considered inappropriate for the logistics and transport needs of the country. The main objectives of the national policy for development and modernization of the road network of the country are the construction of highways along the main routes and those that are part of the European corridors. The rest of the national road network is in a mediocre state and there is a need to increase the security of the growing transport flow. Bulgaria has international airports in Sofia, Varna, Burgas, Ruse, Plovdiv and Gorna Oryahovitsa, which need modernization. Our most important seaports are Varna and Bourgas, and waterways - Vidin, Rousse and Lom, which should also be modernized. The rail sector also needs large investments, whether for infrastructure or for the landfills themselves. About 40% of the Bulgarian railway network is electrified and about 15% has a double track. There are serious problems with the sanitary and hygiene network in the sites, cities, town and villages; There is a low level of development of the environment for cultural and historical tourism - local and external;

2. Factors related to tourism service are not found to be critical. The quantity and quality of the accommodation base, the catering services and other recreational services are considered sufficient and of good quality. There is no real need to increase the capacity of the accommodation base: the reported significant problems are related to the low employment of the existing accommodation base. Only two are the regions with employment above the average for the country (30%) - the Bulgarian Black Sea and Strandzha Mountain. The problem is the low efficiency of the accommodation base

but not the supply shortage. A sustainable approach to the development of cultural and historical tourism can be achieved by investing in local attractions, improving the infrastructure and socialization of cultural and historical and natural sites as well as promoting local tourist product; The construction of new sites should be in areas where there are currently no accommodation facilities. The new sites should mainly include small hotels, family hotels and guest houses in the traditional for the region architectural style with an authentic atmosphere that are environmentally friendly;

3. Insufficiently developed element is **tourist information:** over 70% of respondents point out as a priority the need for a more active role of tourist information centers. A tourist who visits a country besides getting to use the main infrastructure (hotels, airports, etc.), also uses tourist information places. The contact points - infopoint, route signs, didactic signs - should be integrated in a homogeneous and connected project that will help guide the tourist but will also stimulate their attention and curiosity. It is possible to create informative routes and signage systems both dynamic and interactive through which the visitor can receive the latest information, book and even purchase tickets for other services and to be stimulated by offers and special promotions. Among the communication tools it is possible to create, for example, audio and video guides, creating attractive thematic brochures, television advertising (videos), effective participation in national and international exhibitions and markets.

4. The results of the study reveal a serious **human resource problem in tourist enterprises** related to qualifications, lack of managerial skills and entrepreneurial culture. Unsatisfactory level of tourist services in cultural and historical sites due to weak language skills, sales, interpersonal and other professional skills; due to the turnover of those employed in tourism. The activity of the public administration is also considered to be insufficient. Employment may be created in places of cultural and historical heritage, especially for young people who have graduated vocational secondary schools in tourism or the elderly population, for example retired teachers whose

professional qualification allows the provision of specialized services related to the

interpretation of the local lifestyle and culture, mountain leadership and more.

In a number of European countries, about 30% of cultural and historical tourism is directed around 30% of the tourist investments. At this stage, the development of cultural and historical tourism in Bulgaria should be connected to the effective absorption of funds from the European Structural Funds. Through implementation of regional projects, higher efficiency in the development of cultural and historical tourism can be achieved.

Table 1. Evaluation and weight of attraction factors

	Ball assessment	Detected ball assessment	Weight in the general
1	1834	8.4516	0.21360
2	1046	4.8202	0.12182
3	1288	5.9355	0.15001
4	1142	5.2627	0.13301
5	1163	5.3594	0.13545
6	943	4.3456	0.10983
7	417	1.9216	0.4856
8	753	3.4700	0.08770

Source: Own calculation.

Table 2. Ranking the attractors factors

Nº	Attracting factors	Weight in the general assessment
1	Factor 1: cultural, historical, religious sites;	0.2136
2	Factor 3: virgin nature;	0.15001
3	Factor 4: new well-organized accommodation facilities, events, exhibitions, etc .;	0.13545
4	Factor 2: presentation of crafts and local activities, acquaintance with life, culture, folklore;	0.13301
5	Factor 7: entertainment venues from discos, night bars and more.	0.12182
6	Factor 6: opportunities for extreme sports, mountain climbing, riding, orientation, trekking, etc .;	0.10983
7	Factor 5: balneological centers with mineral water;	0.08770
8	Factor 8: opportunities for hunting, fishing, gathering of herbs, mushrooms, etc .;	0.04856

Source: Own calculation.

The priority actions to be taken, according to the opinion of the tourists who took part in the

survey and have already visited different cultural and historical sites in Bulgaria are:

- Renovation, restoration and conservation of archaeological sites; restoration of old buildings and territorial structures; preservation of values with an emphasis on the relationship between historical heritage, local traditions and modern interventions;
- Implementation of the European standards in improving the infrastructure used to go to cultural and historical sites, such as road network and public transport;
- Improvement of tourist supply by strengthening the network of information tourist offices, access to tourist information, creation of new tourist routes, training of qualified personnel;
- Development of tourist advertising; maximum visibility and recognition of the tourist offer;

CONCLUSIONS

Bulgaria has rich and various cultural and historical tourist potential which is still not enough utilized and implemented for the development of cultural and historical tourism. This development should urgently address a number of important issues - especially in areas such as: tourist valorisation of cultural and historical resources; development and enrichment of the proposed tourist product by incorporating elements of cultural and historical character; promoting advertisement of Bulgaria as a destination for cultural and historical tourism; training and permanent qualification of the personnel in the sector; development and modernization of the general technical and specialized tourist infrastructure; taking action at national, regional and local level in these key problematic areas.

Solving of these issues requires conceptual solutions and broad co-ordination between public and private sector and local government.

The prospects for the development of cultural and historical tourism are related to the achievement of basic strategic objectives in the following directions:

-Development of a strategy for the development of cultural and historical tourism in the country, defining the main long-term goals and priorities for the public sector, the local self-government authorities and the tourism sector; uniting the efforts for development of cultural and historical tourism at the three spatial levels - national, regional and local as well as between the authorities and the tourist sector;

-Developing sustainable and competitive tourist products (thematic products and routes) in the field of cultural and historical tourism through applying innovative approaches in cooperation with cultural institutions, academic institutions, tourism businesses and local authorities;

-Creating and imposing a recognizable image of Bulgaria as a destination for cultural and historical tourism; developing and imposing a national tourist brand of Bulgaria for this purpose;

-Creating a register of cultural monuments of tourist importance which are public state property;

-Introduction of modern forms of sales and distribution - creation of on-line ticket centers, electronic tickets, combined tickets for different sites, etc.;

-Infrastructure development, improvement of accessibility, transport links and communications at national, regional and local level; improving transport information;

-Reducing the seasonality of the national tourist product by increasing the possibilities for its year-round practice; increasing the average annual occupancy of the accommodation base;

-Development of methodology and implementation of a system for tourist monitoring of cultural and historical sites at municipal level;

-Organization of advertising campaigns for the promotion of cultural and historical tourism; production of souvenirs, thematically related to the cultural and historical sites;

-Advertising design of tickets for museums and other cultural and historical sites to play the role of souvenirs (according to the example of cultural cities in Europe and the world);

-Improving the collection of incomes from entry fees and tickets for cultural and historical sites by introducing new charging technologies (for example, electronic chip tickets).

-Creating a permanent partnership between higher education institutions and vocational schools in tourism - on the one hand, and on the other - tourist business, local authorities and non-governmental organizations in the field of cultural and historical tourism to conduct marketing surveys and analyzes; to organize student internships in the field of tour guiding, animation and information services for tourists in order to attract young work force in the sector; training and permanent qualification of the personnel in the sector;

-Encouraging the membership of municipalities with cultural and historical sites in international, national and regional tourist organizations.

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