

DOI 10.20544/HORIZONS.A.26.3.20.P01

UDC 338.48-6:7/8(497.7-14)

**ANALYSIS OF POTENTIALS AND ATTRACTIONS
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL
TOURISM IN THE SOUTH-WEST PLANNING
REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF N. MACEDONIA**

Michael Risteski

University “St. Kliment Ohridski” - Bitola, Faculty of Tourism and
Hospitality, Ohrid, Republic of N. Macedonia,
michael.risteski@uklo.edu.mk

Sasho Korunovski

University “St. Kliment Ohridski” - Bitola, Faculty of Tourism and
Hospitality, Ohrid, Republic of N. Macedonia,
saso.korunovski@uklo.edu.mk

Jordan Kocovski

jokoc@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper is the result of the conducted research activities in the preparing of a Sub-strategy for Cultural Tourism in the Republic of N. Macedonia in 2019 in which the author was directly involved. The research involved determining the current state of cultural tourism through situation analysis and valorization of various cultural tourism potentials. This resulted in specifying concrete spatial units and values that have the most favorable opportunities for active inclusion in the current tourism offer. Two types of spatial units were defined – existing and new areas which were zoned and mapped. Existing areas have the aim to enrich the current tourism offer in order to make them more attractive. New areas have the purpose for creating new tourism products and services that will be competitive. This paper examines the South-west Planning Region as the most developed in the country with the aim to promote cultural tourism development.

KEY WORDS: Cultural tourism, tourism development, tourism potentials, tourism attractions, tourism mapping.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism as a multidimensional and multifactorial occurrence has become a global phenomenon that is developing at an unprecedented pace. The main characteristic of tourism is its dynamism and continuous variability. Contemporary tourism development reveals specificities that are directed towards expanding the tourist demand (Risteski et al., 2012). Tourism activities have the potential to expand almost indefinitely. These trends in the expansion of demand are moving towards increasing the quantity of activities and services in the tourist offer, but also towards improving the quality of services provided. It is especially important to emphasize that the tourist demand is constantly looking for new experiences. As a result, fierce competition can be observed within the tourist offer in an effort to attract a larger and more quality tourist clientele. Tourism policy makers must constantly develop more attractive tourism products (Korunovski, 2011). In order to achieve this, it is necessary to combine natural and cultural resources in innovative ways. Tourism can be defined as an economic process that in one way deals with the natural and cultural heritage of a particular area (Ascher, 1985). Certain research by the UNWTO has shown that cultural tourism accounts for as much as 40% of the total number of tourist trips globally (Brida et al., 2013). Specifically, surveys have been undertaken by the United Nations World Tourism Organization in 2015 (UNWTO, 2015), according to which the arrivals of tourists involved in cultural and tourism activities has been steadily increasing compared to total international arrivals. In that sense, 40% of international arrivals are considered “cultural – tourism” related. Such tourists are included in cultural visits or involved in cultural activities during their stay. This paper examines the potentials for development of cultural tourism in the South-west Planning Region (SWPR) of the Republic of N. Macedonia. Especially important are the cultural potentials and values that are still not being utilized on a satisfactory level in the current tourist offer.

Situation analysis of cultural tourism in the South-west Planning Region

The SWPR is the mostly developed tourism region in the Republic of N. Macedonia (Sekulovska et al., 2018). This is not only true for the level of development of the tourism infrastructure, but also for the achieved tourism turnover (Marinoski & Risteski, 2019). In this regard, the largest number of hospitality establishments that provide accommodation services are present in the SWPR (134 facilities), which represents 23.34 % of the total number

on the state level (State Statistical Office of the Republic of N. Macedonia, 2016). If we analyze these facilities in a structural sense (number of available rooms and beds), we can conclude that the SWPR stands out even further. Namely, the SWPR has 6407 accommodation rooms and 17575 beds at its disposal, which represents 37.17 % and 37.97 % respectively, of the total accommodation capacity in RN Macedonia. Concerning the catering facilities that provide services of food and drinks, the SWPR is in 3rd place, falling behind the Skopje Planning Region (SKPR) and the Polog Planning Region (POPR). However, the percentage share of the SWPR amounts to 11.77%, which is quite noticeable (Korunovski et al., 2019).

Tourism turnover shows even better results for the SWPR (Korunovski et al., 2019). In 2018, the percentage share of the SWPR, in terms of materialized tourist visits, amounted to 37.2 % of the total number of registered tourists in RN Macedonia. The SKPR participated with 32.6 %, while the South-east Planning Region (SEPR) achieved a share of 14.2 %. Domestic tourists amounted to 43.2 % in the region in 2018, and thus the SWPR was in first place. Similar results were achieved for the analysis of realized tourist overnights (for the total number of tourists and domestic tourists).

Somewhat lower results were obtained for foreign tourists visiting the SWPR. Namely, in first place was the SKPR (45.4%), while the SWPR was in second place with a share of 33.7% of the total realized tourist visits in the country. However, the analyzed region achieved more overnights by foreign tourists. The difference between the SWPR and the SKPR was more than double (48.5% compared to 20.7%, respectively) (Korunovski et al., 2019).

Analysis of potentials and attractions in the South-west Planning Region for the development of cultural tourism

The SWPR is characterized by excellent prevalent conditions for the development of cultural tourism. Namely, important and unique anthropogenic tourism values exist in the area, some of which are already well established and visited by tourists, while the rest represent a still untapped potential (Marinoski & Risteski, 2019). The municipalities of Ohrid, Struga and Debrca are included in the SWPR. Areas from these municipalities are part of the area of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Thus, the region already has international importance in terms of providing opportunities for the development of cultural tourism. This cultural brand should also be nurtured in the future. In this sense, actions should be undertaken in order to eliminate the negative influences that could endanger this international protection status, as well as to expand the area under protection (Risteski, 2019).

In terms of urbanism and architecture, the traditional architecture (in urban but also in rural areas) is particularly important. The area of well-preserved urban traditional buildings, which is also globally renowned, is the architectural unit of the old part of Ohrid. All types of visitors (as part of their excursion activities) can visit this specific traditional architecture. The Ohrid city core is especially attractive because some of its buildings have facilities for accommodation. Some of them even have a typical interior design, thus presenting the local ethnographic heritage. The complexes of houses in rural areas should also be mentioned. The SWPR is abundant in important contents of this kind (Marinoski & Risteski, 2019). Thus, within its territory, the complexes of traditionally built houses in Gari and Osoj, as well as in Vevchani (some of which are protected heritage) must be mentioned. There are also a number of other rural areas with similar features. Among the cultural attractions of architectural type, the buildings of sacral architecture should also be taken into consideration. There is a relatively high percentage of the Muslim population in parts of the region, compared to orthodox Christians, which makes the area especially attractive. This represents a significant development potential, especially when creating complex tourist offers. A few noteworthy buildings of this type can be distinguished, and some of them also have a general attractive power and unique attractiveness because they are globally renowned. The most important buildings of sacral architecture in the SWPR are the following (Korunovski et al., 2019):

Municipality of Ohrid- St. Clement's Monastery – St. Panteleimon, St. Sofia, Holy Mother of God Perivleptos, St. John the Theologian - Kaneo, Holy Mother of God - Bolnichka, St. Nicholas - Bolnichki, St. Nicholas - Gerakomija, Holy Mother of God - Kamensko, St. Paraskeva (Velgoshti), Monastery of St Naum (Ljubanishta), Holy Mother of God - Zahumska (Trpejca), St. Stefan, Holy Mother of God - Peshtanska, St. Erasmus, Mal Sveti Kliment, St. Demetrius, Mali Sveti Vrachi, St. Constantine and Hellen, Turbe of the former Imaret Mosque - Sinan Chelebi, Krst-Dzamija Mosque - Hadzi Turgut.

Municipality of Debrca- All Saints (Leshani), St. George (Godivje).

Municipality of Struga- Monastery Kalishta and St. Athanasius (Kalishta), Archangel Michael (Radozhda), Holy Savior (Vishni), Halveti Tekke.

Municipality of Debar- Monastery of St. George the Victorious (Rajchica).

Municipality of Kichevo- Monastery of St. George (Knezhino), Kichevo Monastery - Most Holy Mother of God – the Immaculate.

It can be concluded that there is an exceptional grouping and concentration of monuments of the highest quality and artistic achievements of cultural creativity in the Municipality of Ohrid. Most of them are listed in the

UNESCO World Heritage List. It gives this area a recognizable cultural image and brand that should be maintained in the future. Such facilities are not only important for the development of religious tourism, given the fact that the city of Ohrid is also referred to as the "Balkan Jerusalem", but such facilities may also constitute a primary category within the cultural - tourist contents intended for particular types of cultural tourists (e.g. Byzantine – era researchers, experts in Islamic art, scholars of Slavic literacy and culture, etc.). Such facilities can also have a complementary role within other types of tourism as part of the tourists' excursion and educational activities. In other municipalities, there are also significant cultural values present in the form of sacral architecture. Monasteries are especially important. The konaks of the monasteries, if properly arranged and equipped, can be used as accommodation facilities for certain types of tourists.

In the second group of architectural buildings, as opposed to the buildings of sacral architecture, are the profane buildings. These are facilities with no religious purpose. These are buildings of cultural - historical significance. Important to mention (in terms of the possibilities for the development of cultural tourism) in the SWPR are the following values (Korunovski et al., 2019): The small Locomotive "Kjivo" - Kichevo and the First School for Albanian Language (Drugovo) in the Municipality of Kichevo, as well as the Turkish Bath - Banjishte Spa and the Elen Skok Bridge in the Municipality of Debar.

An important category of values within the cultural attractions are also the archaeological sites. There are many such sites, not only within the SWPR, but also at the state level. A relatively large number of such sites in the SWPR are significant and recognizable, but those with the most prevalent attractive-motivational features should be mentioned: Samuel Fortress, Plaoshnik, Antique Theater, Fortress at Gradishte and underwater archeological site "City of Mikjo" – Bay of Bones in the Municipality of Ohrid, while in the municipality of Makedonski Brod significant are Devini Towers – Devich.

The SWPR abounds with a relatively large number of museums (Korunovski et al., 2019). Such cultural institutions and buildings are especially important because they are specialized for tourism purposes, especially for visitors and tourists involved in cultural - tourism activities. The most important museums in the region are the following: House of the Robev Family, Icon Gallery, House of Hristo Uzunov, Museum on Water – Bay of Bones in Ohrid Municipality; Museum "Dr. Nikola Nezlobinski" and Gallery "Vangel Kodzoman" in the Municipality of Struga; Museum of Western Macedonia in the Municipality of Kichevo; Memorial House of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Father (Kodzadzik) in the Municipality of Centar Zhupa.

In addition to the material cultural heritage, important anthropogenic values are also various events and festivals. They represent the intangible cultural potential (Korunovski, 2011). Numerous cultural and religious events are held within the region (Rakicevik&Risteski, 2017). The most important religious events are the following: Bogojavljenje - Epiphany, Dormition of the Mother of God (Skebatno), celebration of St. Clement and St. Naum, celebration of Bajram in the Municipality of Ohrid; Carnival in Vevchani during the celebration of Vasilica in the Municipality of Vevchani.

Some of the cultural events and festivals in the SWPR have global reputation, which also attract a large number of foreign tourists, while others have local and regional significance but have great potential to become world-class events (Risteski & Risteski, 2016). The most important events are the following (Rakicevik&Risteski, 2017): "Ohrid Summer", "Balkan Festival of Folk Songs and Dances", "Ohrid Fest", "Prlichevi Besedi", Ohrid - Old Town Meetings, Ohrid Swimming Marathon in Ohrid Municipality, and "Struga Poetry Evenings" in Struga.

Ethnographic heritage includes cultural values that can be incorporated into cultural tourism in a variety of ways. The SWPR is recognizable for the existence of such contents. Important to mention are the following values: handmade Ohrid pearls, manufacturing of traditional paper, woodcarving, icon painters, mosaic artists, stained glass making, filigree makers, manufacturing traditional costumes in the Municipality of Ohrid; manufacturing folk costumes in Veleshta in the Municipality of Struga; folk costume makers (Shopska folk costume in Trebishte, Mijak folk costumes in Ehloec). There are also various gastronomic specialties in the region, which are part of the ethnographic cultural heritage (Kocevski & Risteski, 2018).

Determining existing and new zones and locations for the development of cultural tourism in the South-west Planning Region

The tables in the following text list zones and centers that are already affirmed (visited) values or represent an unused potential for cultural tourism development. Presented are propositions for determining new zones and locations for creating new cultural tourism offers. On the other hand, also presented are existing locations (centers) that have the potential to expand and widen the current cultural tourism offer. Both types are important for the development of cultural tourism in the SWPR. These locations were used as the basis for the process of mapping and zoning in the following research activities of the project (Korunovski et al., 2019). A narrative description of the locations' characteristics is also provided below the tables.

Table 1. Existing zones and locations for the development of cultural tourism in the SWPR

Locations (centers)	Region and name of the thematic tour
Ohrid (Ancient Lychnidos, medieval churches and monasteries) Samuel Fortress Museums in Ohrid Museum on water St. Naum Trpejca (Holy Mother of God Zahumska)	Region: Ohrid – Struga <i>World heritage in the focus</i>
Struga Cave churches in the zone Vevchani Drimkol (villages)	

General characteristics: this region and this zone represent the most developed tourist area in the Republic of N. Macedonia. This is convincingly shown by the data on tourist visits and tourist stay. In this sense, in the last years (2014-2018) the region has been visited by about 37 % of the total tourists in the country, and has achieved almost 50 % of the total nights spent nationwide. Most of the tourism turnover is due to cultural tourism related products, as 54.3 % of the surveyed participants visited the region for "Rest, visit of cultural heritage" (Andreeski, 2017).

Products (cultural capital of the destination): this is a World Heritage Site, so the opportunities for cultural tourism are great and somehow utilized. The most important topics around which tourism products can be formed are the following: Ancient Lychnidos (theater, polyconchal church, early Christian basilicas, St. Erasmus site); Via Egnatia (Radozhda, Struga, St. Erasmus, Ohrid); St. Clement and Naum of Ohrid (Plaoshnik, St. Naum Monastery, numerous churches that preserve the memories of both Saints in Ohrid and Struga); Samuel and the Ohrid Archbishopric (Fortress, St. Sophia, Holy Mother of God Perivleptos, Basilica in Vranishta); Struga City of Poetry and Literature (presentation of numerous medieval records - Struga Apostle, Struga Manuscript, Brothers Miladinovci, Struga Poetry Evenings); Cave Churches, Vevchani and Vevchani Carnival, Museums and Festivals of Ohrid and Struga.

Standards, quality, sustainability: standards applied for the protection and conservation of individual buildings are high, but sometimes, inappropriate interventions and interpolations of objects are implemented that disturb the appearance and degrade the environment. In some areas, the quality of space may be reduced, disproportionate to the quality of the values it possesses. Sustainability is hampered by the threat of the zone being placed in the category "World Heritage in Danger".

Facilities, equipping, infrastructure: The region has a significant number of tourist facilities with good diversification, tourist equipping is at a good level, with numerous information centers and other means of information distribution. The infrastructure meets the needs for most of the year, but during periods of increased tourist visits, crowding and traffic congestion occurs, which may adversely affect tourists' impressions.

Organization (DMO): the already developed tourism products indicate that the complex links of destination management operate in the region. However, there is the possibility of improving the management structure by specifically linking the different thematic routes to the zone. This approach is necessary as the market can be saturated with a standardized offer that has been around for a prolonged period, so new thematic innovative products need to be introduced.

The destination brand would be the following: WORLD HERITAGE IN THE FOCUS. The name of the city of Ohrid etymologically derives from the words: *vo hrid, on a hill*; which in tourist sense means that the treasures created through the centuries are exposed on the hill.

The destination image has to be created around the point of experiencing antiquity and the Middle Ages in its entire splendor.

Competitiveness and Attractiveness: the competitiveness and attractiveness of the region is high, but improvements need to be made in order not to stagnate and not to reduce the number of visits by cultural tourists.

Table 2. New zones and locations for the development of cultural tourism in the SWPR

Locations (centers)	Region and name of the thematic tour
Kichevo Holy Mother of God the Immaculate	Region: Kichevo – Makedonski Brod (Porechie) <i>Along the traces of the Slavic alphabet</i>
Devich Cave Peshna	
Villages on the road towards Demir Hisar	

Makedonski Brod (Church in Trebino)	
Overlap with another region with the monasteries in the surroundings of Demir Hisar (villages of Zhvan, Zhurche, Slepche)	

Products (cultural capital of the destination): the key monument in this group is the monastery of Holy Mother of God - the Immaculate (Kichevo Monastery). This monastery remained excluded from the cultural and political influences of the surroundings, so that the liturgy was conducted only in Macedonian. Thus, the monastery became a cultural hotspot aided by the nearby towns and settlements: Kichevo, Krushevo, Debar, Struga and Ohrid. The ruined church in Trebino near Makedonski Brod preserved the oldest Slavic inscriptions in the country on its walls (inscribed on its frescoes). In these areas, separated from the main routes, Macedonian culture flourished through the centuries of disobedience. Witnesses of such cultural genesis are the monasteries of Demir Hisar's surroundings, in the villages of Zhvan, Gjurche and Slepche (especially the latter, which will be a beacon of culture in the difficult times of the Ottoman rule through its transcribing activities). There is also the village of Smilevo, with an abundance of traditional architecture, as a source of disobedience through the work of Dame Gruev and the famous Congress of Smilevo.

Standards, quality, sustainability: the standards that have to be applied to the above stated cultural values imply the formation of high-quality spatial units with a good level of presentation of their key values (frescoes with inscriptions, documented records, etc.).

Facilities, equipping, infrastructure: The zone does not possess significant tourist facilities and equipping is poor although it belongs to the most developed tourist region. The current infrastructure meets the basic needs. However, serious improvements are needed in many places.

Organization (DMO): In an organizational way, the zone can be organized through the involvement of several stakeholders (church, local communities in some settlements, theme-related organizations, tourist associations and the business community).

The destination brand would be the following statement: ALONG THE TRACES OF THE SLAVIC ALPHABET. The aforementioned churches were the guardians of national identity and the bridges that merged the Middle Ages with the new century of the Macedonian writing tradition.

The destination image would be created around the isolated places that built the vaults of Macedonian national identity.

Competitiveness and Attractiveness: at a stage of minimal tourism development it is difficult to assess the competitiveness and attractiveness of the resource potentials.

Conclusion

Tourism development of the SWPR or the country in general, has not yet been developed on a satisfactory level. This means that the current level of tourism development is insufficiently competitive on the tourism market. Due to the spatial characteristics of the region and the country (the fact that it does not have access to the sea), new and innovative ways of attracting potential tourist clientele are needed. Such solutions may be sought in the possibilities for developing other selective types of tourism, in contrast to lakeside tourism. Particularly important are those tourism types that enable the use of values, services and activities throughout the whole year. This will remove the pronounced seasonality of tourism in the SWPR. The main objective of developing such selective types of tourism is to make the region more competitive on the regional and global tourism market. In this direction is the development of cultural tourism on this territory. Namely, there are attractive and unique cultural resources in the SWPR that need to be put into an active function of tourism. The ultimate goal is to increase the number of tourists, but also to attract a more quality tourist clientele. Particularly within the cultural - tourist movements participate people that have higher purchase power. The development of cultural tourism in a given area does not only generate economic and social benefits for the local community, but also directly affects the protection and promotion of cultural resources and attractions. The SWPR has various cultural values that have the potential to widen the current cultural tourism offer or to create innovative and attractive cultural tourism products.

REFERENCES:

1. Ascher F., Tourism: Transnational Corporations and Cultural Identities, Paris, UNESCO, 1985
2. Andreeski C., Study on the Provision of data in the field of tourism and preparation of a model for projection of future indicators, Ministry of Economy of the Republic of N. Macedonia, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality – Ohrid, 2017

3. Brida, Gabriel J., Meleddu M., Paulina M., The Economic Impacts of Cultural Tourism. In *The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Tourism*, ed. Smith, M., and Richards, G., New York: Routledge, p. 110–115, 2013
4. Kocevski J., Risteski M., The Complex Role of Food in Tourism, *HORIZONS – International Scientific Journal*, Vol. 23, UKLO - Bitola, p. 305-312, 2018
5. Korunovski S., Cultural Heritage, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality – Ohrid, 2011
6. Korunovski S., Marinoski N., Andreeski C., Nestoroska I., Risteski M., Sub-strategy for development of cultural tourism in the Republic of N. Macedonia, Ministry of Economy - Skopje, 2019
7. Marinoski N., Risteski M., Tourism Potentials of the Southwest Planning Region, *ISCTBL - 2019, Goce Delcev University – Stip*, p. 289-296, 2019
8. Rakicevik G., Risteski M., Analysis of event tourism related to traditions in the Republic of Macedonia, *Knowledge – International Journal*, Skopje, p. 1797-1811, 2017
9. Risteski M., Tourist valorization as the basis for managing tourism destinations, PhD Thesis, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality – Ohrid, 2019
10. Risteski M., Kocevski J., Arnaudov K., Spatial planning and sustainable tourism as a basis for developing competitive tourist destinations, *International Scientific Journal PROCEDIA – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 44, Elsevier, UK, p. 375-386, 2012
11. Risteski M., Risteski N., Determining Quality of Tourism Events, *Hotel Link 27-28*, Belgrade, p. 1-9, 2016
12. Sekulovska M., Marinoski N., Nestoroska I., Risteski M., Macedonia, In *Hospitality and Tourism in Transition in Central and Eastern Europe: A Comparative Analysis – Vodenska M. (Ed.)*, 1st Edition, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, p. 261-295, 2018
13. State Statistical Office of the Republic of N. Macedonia, Census of Hospitality Facilities, Skopje, 2016