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CONTEMPORARY METHODS AND APPROACHES FOR TOURIST VALORIZATION¹

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ABSTRACT

Creating attractive tourism products for a particular clientele is a complex task for management structures in tourist destinations. In this regard, it is necessary adequately to valorize the different tourist resources in order for them to be allocated and to be put into action. There are numerous methods for valorization in tourism that are mostly systematized according to the field to which they belong (economic, social and cultural). This research derives from the results of the author's doctoral thesis on this topic. It is important to note that the empirical field research involved the use of contemporary methodological approaches. In particular, methodological approaches that have international validity and applicability were used: European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Destinations Toolkit (ETIS-Toolkit) and valorization of the three tourism destination subsystems: Factors, Attractors and Support Services (FAS-approach). These two methodological approaches for valorization are applied on the territory of the Ohrid tourist area

KEYWORDS: tourist valorization, tourist destination, tourism development, FAS-approach, ETIS-toolkit.

¹ original scientific paper

INTRODUCTION

Tourist destinations consist of numerous values that allow tourists and visitors to visit them while creating their own different experiences. This results in the complexity of the process of tourist destinations management. Therefore the need arises for using proper valorization approaches of all available resources that exist in the particular tourist area. This will allow the various tourist resources to be allocated and put into use by the creators of tourist development strategies. Valorization is actually a process that transforms tourist resources into tourist attractions. In the scientific literature, there are different types of tourist valorization. However, these types are often equated with economic valuation. Some of the economic valuation methods are: “Willingness to pay” (Leibenstein, 1950), Cost-Benefit Analyses, Total Economic Valuation (Albani & Romano, 1998), Contingent Valuation (Davis, 1963), Dichotomous choice (Bishop & Heberlein, 1990), Hedonic Travel Cost, Choice Modeling (Brown & Mendelsohn, 1984), etc. We must emphasize that these types of methods and approaches (economic) need to be expanded, since tourism is a phenomenon that exhibits cause-and-effect relationships with the various spheres of human existence (social, cultural and economic). Furthermore, the valorization of tourist sites should be in the function of their sustainable development. In the paper’s empirical research, contemporary methodological approaches for valorization were used, which have global recognition and applicability. The chosen territory for analysis was the Ohrid tourist area (the thesis’ case study). Various global valorization approaches were used: European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Destinations Toolkit (ETIS-Toolkit), Valorization of the three tourism destination subsystems: Factors, Attractors and Support Services (FAS-approach), Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), Environment and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), Valorization of the Tourist Market, Spatial Valorization of the Destination, Valorization of Management Systems in Tourism, Valorization of the Tourism Resources, Valorization of the Development Opportunities of the Destination (Risteski, 2019). These approaches relate to different aspects of the tourism process.

The most encompassing applicable valorization approaches elaborated in this paper are the following: *European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Destinations Toolkit (ETIS-Toolkit)* and *Valorization of the three tourism destination subsystems: Factors, Attractors and Support Services (FAS-approach)*. The reason for this is that these two approaches (FAS and ETIS) include elements of all the methods mentioned above. They were combined with the valorization analysis of the resource base of the destination. An important outcome of these valorization approaches is the prioritizing of values which is especially important for creating development directions by the creators of tourism plans, programs and strategies (Risteski et al., 2012). Thus, this paper has theoretical and practical significance

QUANTITATIVE VALORIZATION OF THE OHRID TOURIST AREA

The quantitative valorization performed within the paper refers primarily to the implementation of the *ETIS-Toolkit*. This involves the quantitative registering and analysis of both natural and cultural resources, analyzed in terms of their sustainable development. In this sense, this system consists of 43 key indicators divided into 4 general categories: Destination Management, Economic Value, Socio-Cultural Impact, Environmental Impact (European Commission, 2016). The amount and type of indicator subsets used depends on the specificity, needs and capabilities of the tourist destination in question. It is important to note that there is no single model that can be applied to all types of tourist destinations (Risteski, 2019). This methodological approach to tourism valorization is combined with the FAS – model. The three categories in this model (Factors, Attractors and Support Services) are regarded as interconnected systems that exist in all destinations. Although this approach (FAS) is primarily qualitative, it can also be applied to quantitative valorization (Risteski & Kocevski, 2018). This system is implemented in terms of the possibilities for development of contemporary and alternative tourism types, as opposed to the lake-based mass tourism. More precisely, the paper refers to the opportunities for the development of rural tourism as a sustainable tourism type, incorporating both natural and cultural tourism values, while respecting sustainability. Primarily rural areas in the Ohrid Municipality were analyzed, as the result of the conducted research activities for creating a Register of Potentials for Rural Tourism (Jankuloski et al., 2016). The territory analyzed in this project was the

South-west Planning Region (SWPR), including the Ohrid tourist area as part of the region. Several stakeholders of different sectors were included (governmental, non-governmental and business sector) who selected the main indicators. Collecting and processing of data was conducted by the author of this paper, thus making it an authentic research. The environmental element is determined through the analysis of indicators and parameters that cover the values of the tourist-geographical position, its land use, bio-geographical characteristics and protected areas as tourist values, as well as waste management in the Ohrid tourist area. These categories are examined through the opportunities for their usage in rural tourism. Table 1 shows some of the processed data and the results obtained from the application of the ETIS approach through various indicators and parameters, while the description and the potential use in rural tourism is presented in narrative form below (Risteski, 2019).

Table 1 .Overview of the environmental components of the Ohrid tourist area according to the ETIS Toolkit

Field of research	Indicators and parameters
Surface area and geographical position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total surface area of the planning region: 3.306 km² - Municipality of Ohrid covers an area of 389,93 km² which is 11,79 % of the area of the SWPR. - Numerous rural settlements exist in the Ohrid tourist area (Vapila, Velestovo, Velgoshti, Lakocherej, Elshani, Konjsko, Kosel, Kuratica, Leskoec, Livoishta, Ljubanishta, Peshtani, Podmolje, Ramne, Racha, Rechica, Svinjishta, Skrebatno, Trpejca, Shipokno etc.). - International contactability (with Albania), through important roads (E-65, E-852, R-501). International transitness is available through “St. Paul the Apostle” – airport. Connections by water are made possible through the Ohrid Lake. The polyvalence is presented through the numerous natural and cultural values in the area.

Land use and protected areas	<p>- Heterogeneous structure of the area. A total of 49,04 % of the municipality's territory is covered in forests.</p> <p>- Total agricultural area of 27.840 ha, which is 71,4 % of the municipality's total, or 20,84 % of the SWPR's agricultural area. The arable land area amounts to 23,37 % of the total agricultural area (plough lands and gardens – 90,1%, orchards – 4,64%, vineyards – 3,57 %, meadows – 1,69 %), while pastures cover an area of 76,63 %.</p> <p>- The National Park "Galichica" is the main protected unit, which accounts for about 47 % of the municipality's surface area. Other protected areas are Lake Ohrid (UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site) and the sulfatara Duvalo (designated as an important monument of nature).</p>
Biodiversity and hunting/fishing grounds	<p>- Woodland vegetation and diverse relict and endemic species within the National Park "Galichica". Abundant with herbal species that have medicinal properties (nettle, sage, wild thyme, basil, yarrow, wort, wild iris, dandelion).</p> <p>- Relatively rich livestock (921 cattle, 196 horses, 6.512 sheep, 1.502 goats, 3.421 pigs, 10.405 poultry), while within the National Park "Galichica" there are 1.644 different species (26 are endemic). Lake Ohrid has also rich flora and fauna with many endemic species.</p> <p>- Hunting grounds in the Ohrid region: Karaorman – 14.030 ha, Debrca – 11.550 ha, Brezhani – 12.620 ha, Zavoj – 12.550 ha, Kosel – 8.065 ha, Mesheishta – 3.110 ha, Belchishta – 4.167 ha.</p> <p>- Lake Ohrid is rich in fish stock (17 species of fish, 10 of which are endemic). Fishing is regulated under a special protection management plan.</p>
Waste management	<p>- Approximately 110.000 tons of solid waste is being generated annually in the SWPR (averagely 500,6 kg of waste per capita).</p> <p>- A total of 2.184.182 m³ discharged untreated wastewater is being generated annually in the SWPR (this represents 51 % of the total amount generated on national level).</p>

Rural settlements in the Ohrid tourist area vary in level of development and population density. However, tourist visitation and accommodation is possible in all of them. Different connections to other municipalities, regions and Albania exist. The destination has international transitness also through the international airport. This provides conditions for developing transit tourist activities and contents. The polyvalence and connectivity provide possibilities for creating combined tourism products. Forests and woodlands can be used to develop mountain and rural based tourism activities. Especially important are the possibilities for tourist activities such as hiking, photo-safari, bird-watching, picking wild berries, medicinal herbs and teas, production of forest honey and so on. The following agricultural products are being cultivated in the region: corn, potatoes, alfalfa and wheat, cabbage, tomatoes, peppers, rye, barley and oats. Furthermore, the following orchard types exist in the region: apples, cherries, sour cherries, plums and walnuts. The Ohrid cherry is a famous indigenous fruit variety, while the Ohrid tomato – “*Jabuchar*” is also autochtone. Pastures and meadows are the basis for livestock activities and farming. The protected area of the National Park “Galichica” has ecological significance and allows educational visits and sightseeing (Risteski & Kocevski, 2015). Lake Ohrid provides numerous water and underwater tourist activities that should be in accordance with the recommendations for its protection. It has the status of a natural rarity. The sulfatara Duvalo as a post-volcanic geological phenomenon needs to be improved in terms of equipping and presentation of its values. It is an important natural resource for the development of geotourism activities. The diverse vegetation of the Ohrid tourist area allows various rural tourism activities to be conducted, such as: herbal tourism, educational activities, research activities, sightseeing, outdoor activities, picking medicinal herbs, traditional medicine, etc. The livestock fund in the Ohrid tourist area opens possibilities for its involvement in rural-tourism activities through the creation of farms and agritourism development. Visitors can get involved in rural tourism activities in a direct and indirect way (observation, educational activities, petting of animals, feeding, horse riding, etc.). The fauna in the National Park “Galichica” is protected by a special protection management plan (hunting is prohibited). However, the tourist activities that can be developed are bird watching and photo safari. The hunting fund in the Ohrid tourist area opens up opportunities for development of hunting tourism and use of gastronomic specialties, animal watching, photography,

Lake Ohrid with its fishing fund is a favorable area for the promotion of sport fishing and fishing tourism, educational activities, as well as use for gastronomic purposes. Illegal fishing and inadequate lake management are major obstacles for the development of such tourism activities, which should be eliminated in the future. Data on generated municipal solid waste within the SWPR show a relatively high level of waste generated per capita annually, which adversely affects the opportunities for development of rural tourism (Marinoski & Risteski, 2019).

QUALITATIVE VALORIZATION OF THE OHRID TOURIST AREA

This section encompasses the resource base for tourism development of the Ohrid tourist area. Namely, besides the quantitative, it is also necessary to analyze the resources in a qualitatively manner. Thus, it is not enough to simply make an inventory of resources, but they must also be valorized in order to determine the adequate development directions (Risteski et al., 2012). The most general division of tourist resources is the division into natural and cultural resources. For their qualitative valorization, field research activities were carried out in the form of a survey questionnaire within the project „Innovative Solutions for Improved Access to Services at Local Level: Creating a Network for Inclusive Development of the South-West Planning Region of the Republic of Macedonia, Mapping of potentials for development of different types of rural tourism and preparing a Register of Potentials for Rural Tourism“ – implemented by the UNDP and in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Self Government (Jankuloski et al., 2016). The questionnaire directly derived from the research activities undertaken by the author of this paper and his involvement as the primary researcher in the project. Primary data were collected based on a predetermined matrix. More specifically, a total of 300 respondents were involved. They were grouped into specific focus groups (representatives of the local self-government of the region’s municipalities, the non-governmental sector, the business community, associations and organizations of rural-related producers, tourism-related organizations, tourism experts etc.). The questionnaire was based on the application of the FAS-methodology, developed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in order to make a tourism valorization assessment in a given area. By using this approach, tourism contents can be identified as "Factors", "Attractors" or "Support Services" (FAS). These three interdependent subsystems create the tourist destination. In the following text,

only the results for the attractors (natural and cultural) are elaborated in detail, because of their primary tourist-development significance they possess (and the vast amount of collected and processed data). In this sense, natural and cultural attractors of all municipalities in the region were analyzed, in order to determine the competitiveness of the different tourist areas in the SWPR (Risteski, 2019). The attractors were valorized in terms of their visitation, accessibility, attractiveness as well as possibilities for improvement and increase of tourist visits. In terms of the current state of visitation of the analyzed natural attractions, highest grades were obtained for the springs of St. Naum, artificial lake Kozjak, Krushino, cave Peshna, river Treska and Ohrid Lake. The lake Ohrid and the springs of St. Naum stand out, not only for the level of their visitation, but also for their attractiveness. These two values are the most visited by tourists (Risteski & Kocevski, 2018). In terms of the attractors' accessibility, best results were obtained for the following: Ohrid Lake, multifunctional area Jasen, Krushino, springs in St. Naum, the rivers Radika, Crn Drim and Treska, the caves Peshna and Samotska Dupka and the gorges along the rivers Treska and Radika. Furthermore, the National Park "Galichica" was assessed with highest grades, regarding its attractiveness. The attractors located in the Ohrid tourist area also showed best results in terms of the possibilities for their improvement. They show a large potential for widening the current tourist offer. This shows a high level of competitiveness of the natural attractors in Ohrid, compared to the other tourist areas in the SWPR. Namely, around 25 % of all registered attractors in the SWPR are located in the Ohrid area. More favorable results were obtained for the cultural attractors. Regarding visitation, the Ohrid tourist area showed very high grades. Furthermore, there is a high concentration of cultural attractors in Ohrid. These attractors are the following: churches and monasteries – St. Kliment's monastery – St. Panteleimon, St. Sofia, Holy Mother of God Perivleptos, St. John Kaneo, Holy Mother of God – Bolnichka, St. Nicholas – Bolnichki, St. Nicholas Gerakomija, Holy Mother of God – Kamensko, St. Paraskevi, St. Naum, Holy Mother of God – Zahumska, St. Stefan, St. Erasmus; the mosques – Ali Pasha, Zejnel Abedin Pasha and the Turbe of Sinan Chelebi; Samuel's Fortress, fortress at Gradishte, Ancient Theater, Archaeological site at Plaoshnik; the museums - „House of the Robev Family“, Icon Gallery, „Hristo Uzunov“, „Grigor Prlichev“, „Bay of Bones“; then the events – Epiphany-Vodici, Easter, celebration of St. Erasmus, St. Naum and St. Kliment, „Ohrid Summer“ - Festival, „Balkan Festival of Traditional Songs and Dances, „Ohrid Fest“, „Prlichevi Besedi“, „Ohrid

Swimming Marathon“, as well as the most important cultural attractor – the urban core of the city of Ohrid. Almost all these attractors got higher grades than 4,5. When comparing the abovementioned attractors with those from the other tourist areas, they show the highest levels of visitation and generated income. Also in terms of the other parameters (accessibility, attractiveness and possibilities for improvement and increase of tourist visits), the cultural attractors in the Ohrid area lead the way. Important to mention is that from the 52 registered cultural attractors, 37 are located in the Ohrid area (this represents 71 % of the SWPR). These cultural attractors are dominant both in quality and quantity on a regional, national and global level. This can also be concluded for some of the cultural events (Rakicevik & Risteski, 2017). The cultural values can mostly be used as a complementary content in rural tourism.

CONCLUSION

This paper aims not only to widen the theoretical research and scientific thought, but also to contribute in a practical sense through the valorization of specific natural and cultural values that are most suitable for the development of alternative types of tourism, such as rural tourism. The concept of tourism valorization is still insufficiently used in practice in our country. Namely, the level of tourism development in the country is relatively low (Sekulovska et al., 2018). This paper should widen the use of contemporary valorization approaches. The methodologies used in this paper have international recognition and significance, while the implemented research activities could be used in other similar tourist destinations domestically and abroad. Creators of tourism development policies can use these activities as guidelines for developing alternative types of tourism. It is not sufficient to create only detailed inventories of tourist resources. The research activities can be used for prioritizing the tourist resources in other destinations (by involving different stakeholders who choose indicators and provide grades through the structured questionnaire we have created). Specifically important are the obtained results that can be used in practice for the development of diverse rural tourism activities in the Ohrid tourist area. It is a fact that rural tourism is still underdeveloped in this region and it will help not only in diversifying the current tourist offer, but also in prolonging the relative short tourist season.

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