

LOCAL RESIDENTS AWARENESS ON CULTURAL TOURISM POTENTIAL OF OHRID

Aleksandar Trajkov, MA

Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Ohrid, UKLO, Bitola

Spasko Kostovski, BSc

Association E KUL TUR, Ohrid

Abstract

Tourist development of small places with great tourist potential has an influence on the quality and style of living of local residents. On the other hand, tourism development is determined by the local people awareness of the tourist potential and their activities in the field of tourism. When creating tourist offer of a place, local people opinion must be considered for its potentials and guidelines of tourist development. Very often their way of thinking is determined by their knowledge of the tourist values of their hometown. Promotion of certain values won't be much helpful if the local population is not aware of the heritage that is surrounding them and if they devalue it on different ways of acting. The purpose of this paper is to examine the opinion of the local population in Ohrid for the tourist potential of the place and the tourist values of Ohrid they are recognizing. Afterword, we'll examine if local people are aware of cultural heritage as a tourist value of Ohrid and if they recognize cultural potential of Ohrid as a tourist brand. Therefore, we'll try to realize basic directions for tourism development of Ohrid given by the local residents.

Key words: Ohrid, tourism, culture, cultural heritage, local population, tourist values

1. Introduction

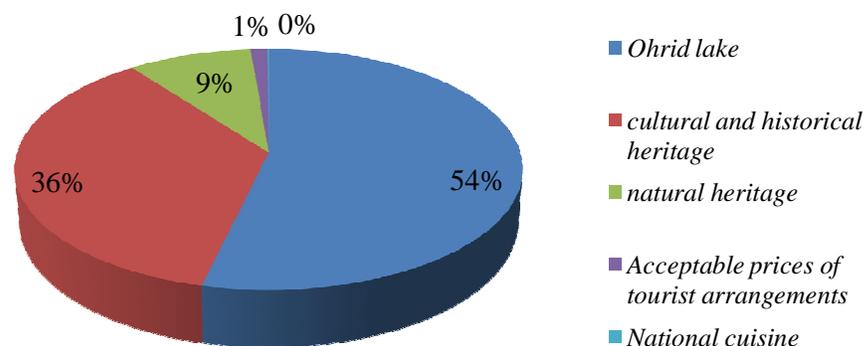
As seen before in the abstract of this paper, there are many reasons indicating that local residents should be taken in consideration in tourism planning. A survey of local residents' opinion on cultural heritage of Ohrid will give us a picture of their awareness of cultural tourism potential of Ohrid. Therefore, a questionnaire containing 15 questions closely

related to the tourism and cultural heritage topics was prepared and a field survey on more than a hundred person's specimen from the city of Ohrid and its close surrounding was conducted. The pick of interviewees was randomly made and about 49% men and 51% women were interviewed. High education percentage (college or more) among examined people was 51 %. High school education poses 46%. Also, an important segment of the survey was the type of occupation or business which people poses. There were four main categories (groups): 1. directly involved in tourism and hosting process (30%), 2. Partly involved in tourism and hosting process (30%), 3. Students at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality in Ohrid (10%), 4. Category of "citizens" or people with no direct link to tourism process (30%). This is considered as respectable and representative specimen to analyze findings from the survey and to point directions for further activities in the field of tourism and cultural heritage according to local residents' opinion.

2. Importance of cultural heritage as a tourist motive according to local population in Ohrid

At first, respondents were asked about their opinion of the main motive of the tourists to visit Ohrid. The findings were that out of six offered answers, 54% of the respondents answered that tourists visit Ohrid because of Lake Ohrid and 36% because of cultural and historical heritage. Other percentages were negligible. (See chart 1)

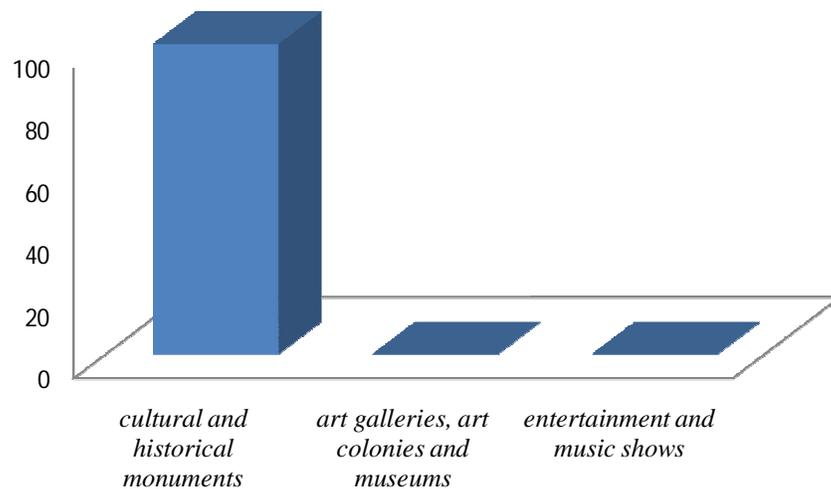
Chart 1: Main motive to visit Ohrid



Also, in their answer on the question what is the most recognizable symbol of Ohrid, with even higher percentage (79%) dominates Lake Ohrid. The church "St. Jovan Kaneo" is far behind (although expected higher percentage) with 8%. Only 5% of respondents think that "Samuel fortress" is a most recognizable symbol of Ohrid.

Afterword, respondents were asked about their opinion on the most important historical and cultural values of Ohrid. Statistically "impossible" 100% of the answers were in favor of *cultural and historical monuments*. Other two options as art galleries, art colonies and museums from one, and entertainment and music shows on the other hand were with "weaker" quality, that shows local people awareness for possibilities of this kind of tourism. (See chart 2)

Chart 2: Most important cultural values of Ohrid (%)

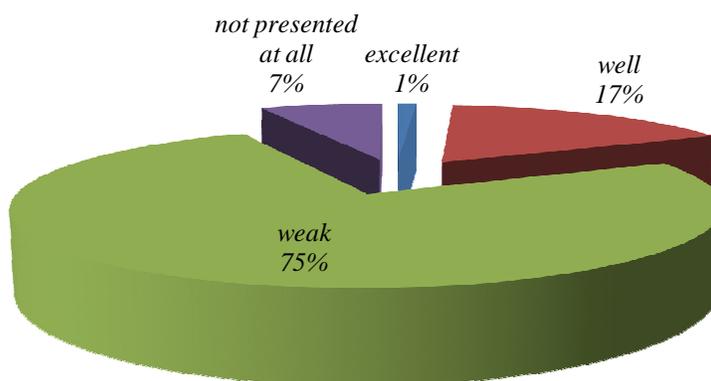


So, these findings show us that most of the local people in Ohrid think that the most recognizable symbol of Ohrid is Ohrid Lake. Only small part of population considers objects from cultural and historical heritage are the most recognizable symbol of Ohrid, although higher percentage was expected on church St. Jovan Kaneo as it can be seen in every prospect and presentation of Ohrid. Still, as the most important cultural and historical values of Ohrid are defined cultural historical monuments, so maybe that explains why more than a third of the respondents think that the main reason tourists to visit Ohrid is the cultural and historical heritage.

3. Presentation of the cultural heritage of Ohrid in Macedonia and abroad

Part of the questionnaire was about the presentation of the cultural heritage of Ohrid in Macedonia and abroad. Only 17% of the citizens consider that cultural heritage of Ohrid is *well* presented in Macedonia and abroad. Even 75% consider cultural heritage presentation as *weak*. Some of the respondents (7%) think that it is *not presented at all*. (see chart 3)

Chart 3: Level of presentation of the presentation of the cultural heritage of Ohrid



We were also looking for answer about the reasons why the cultural heritage is weakly presented or not presented at all. More than a half of respondents (55%) think that the Central government is to be blamed for its lack of engagement in cultural promotion. About one of five, or 21% consider that Local government is responsible for poor presentation home and abroad. Deficiency of financial funds (13%) and general economical situation (5%) respectively are significant reasons for weak promotion.

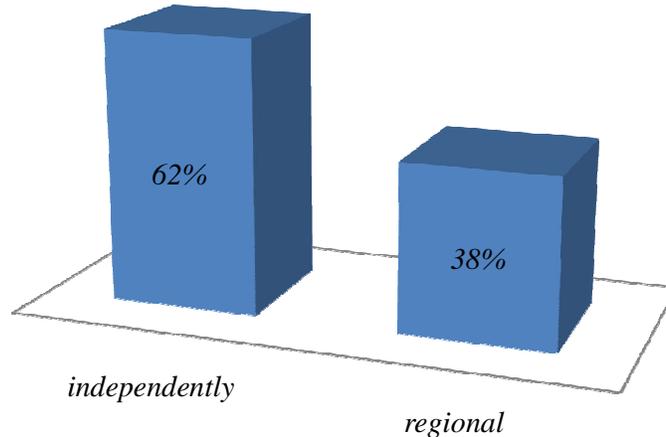
Local residents were also asked "Is the cultural heritage significant basis for tourism development?" and "According to you, what type of cultural heritage should have priority in overall offer and tourist promotion of Ohrid?" Presented answers shows that 71% of respondents are with predominant opinion that cultural heritage is a significant basis for tourism development, and in cultural heritage offer, accent will be at churches and monasteries (66%). Antique monuments as a priority are considered in 22% of given answers.

Respondents were asked about their opinion of the type of instruments that are most suitable for presenting Ohrid tourism values. Electronic media would be most suitable

for promotion of tourism values, consider 57% of interviewed, contrary 17% in favor of the classic press. It has to be said that many people often selected multiply answers which leads to conclusion that promotion of Ohrid home and abroad should be diverse.

Interesting answers were shown on the question: Should Ohrid as a destination be presented independently abroad, or regionally, in co-operation with Struga, Prespa, Pogradec etc? Although many analysis show that best way to promote Ohrid is to promote whole region, people of Ohrid are little bit local –patriotic. 63% wants Ohrid to be "alone" in presenting it's values, contrary just 37% which think opposite. (See chart 4)

Chart 4: Preferred ways to present Ohrid as a tourist destination



About local people opinion on who should be strategy bearer on tourism development, most of them (64%) think that Local government should be tourism development strategy bearer. 30 percent think tourist subjects should have that role, and only 4% are in favor of Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality.

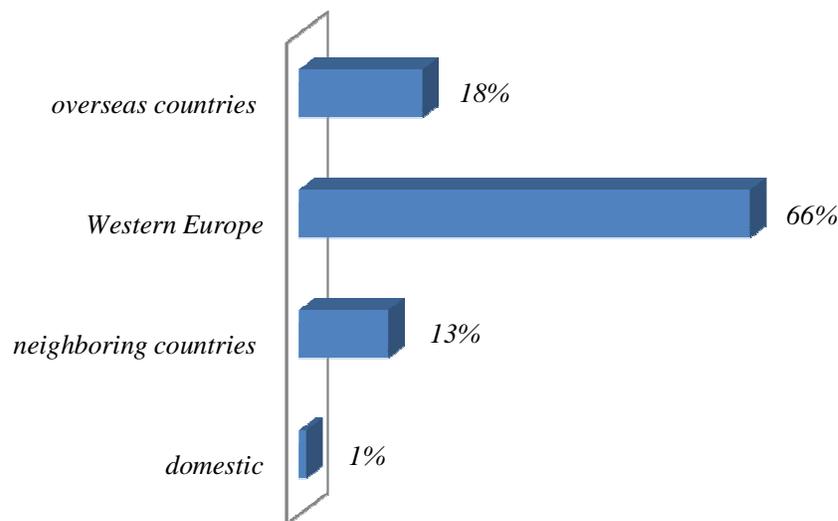
This way, we can conclude that very high percent of local people think that cultural heritage of Ohrid is not well presented. As the most of the locals find cultural heritage, especially churches and monasteries, very important for tourism development, they expect higher level of promotion. The reason for weak presentation of cultural heritage is pointed in the lack of the activities of central and local government, while less than one of four respondents think that overall economical and financial situation has an influence on it. The main role in tourism development, that way in tourist promotion, according local respondents should have the local government. At the end, we can also conclude that various instruments

and ways for presentation are acceptable for locals, but they consider that individual presentation of tourist values of Ohrid is the most appropriate.

4. Local opinion on most suitable type of guests and tourism for Ohrid

Most of the guests that visits Ohrid are either domestic or from neighboring countries (ex –Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece). But this survey has shown that they are not as "popular" among locals as foreign tourists from Western Europe. Only one percent of respondents want domestic tourists to be predominant in Ohrid, 13% are in favor of neighboring countries tourists, 18% from overseas countries such US and Australia and vast majority of interviewees thinks the best tourists for Ohrid are from Western Europe (66%). (See chart 5)

Chart 5: Desired generating tourist markets for Ohrid

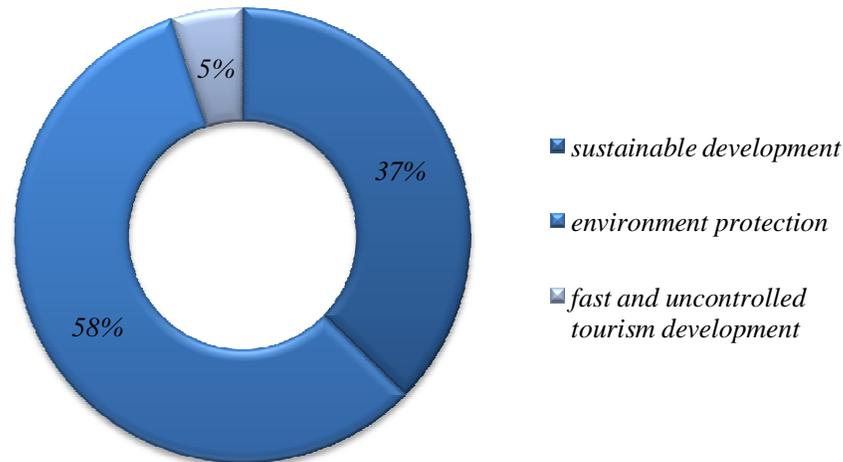


Consequently, survey participants consider that most suitable type of tourism for Ohrid will be: cultural and historical tourism (37%) apropos elite tourism (29%). Only 22 percent think that mass tourism is most acceptable for Ohrid. If a parallel is made to third question, a conclusion is that citizens have sense for the meaning of cultural heritage.

Respondents were also asked if they prefer rapid, uncontrolled tourism development over environment protection and the answers to this question showed that 58% of citizens favor environment protection with sustainable development (37%) over fast and uncontrolled

tourism development (only 5%). We can tell by this that eco awareness of locals is on high level. (see chart 6)

Chart 6: Preferred tourism development of Ohrid



5. Conclusion

In our opinion, this survey is first of a kind in our town (hopefully not last). Reactions of interviewed people were most positive. Everyone was surprisingly "task oriented" and general feeling was that people has many more to say on Tourism that this questionnaire intend to find out in a first place. We consider this is a solid basis for strategy mint in tourism, or the results of the survey can be powerful instrumental in hands of those who are involved in tourism planning and tourism development of Ohrid. For example: If 75% of the respondents think that Ohrid cultural tourism potential is poorly presented, let's joint forces between Local and Central government transform that in positive 75 percent.

From obtained data it is notable that Ohrid potential in tourism, especially in cultural tourism is "out there", pretty much proven over the years. Ohrid is a brand and its tourism potential is obvious, its main symbols are recognized as well. Of course there is a space for improvement at every level. Without pretension, with clear thought , we didn't wrote The Bible, but we modestly contributed towards strengthening awareness on importance of tourism, cultural and historical heritage, and ecology as well.