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CULTURAL TOURISM

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Abstract

In this paper we will try to analyse the cultural tourism. We will start by referring to the complex concepts of tourism and culture and to the synergies existing between them. We will define cultural tourism and present its appearance and evolution as well as its importance as a modern form of tourism. We will present the various types of cultural tourism with their characteristics and the specific features of cultural tourists according to their interests. We will also mention that there are advantages and disadvantages for any kind of tourism depending on the position – local communities, companies or tourists. For the future we will refer to the new partnership between UNWTO and UNESCO.

1. Cultural tourism

1.1. Tourism and culture

Tourism represents one leading sector of the economy. According to UNWTO/UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 2012, for the first time in history, over one billion international tourists travelled the world in one single year, up from a mere 25 million in 1950. By 2030, UNWTO forecasts this number to reach 1.8 billion. (UNWTO/UNESCO, 2015) One billion tourists mean as many opportunities for economic growth, job creation, small and medium enterprises, the renewal of urban and rural areas, improvement of livelihood, and the appreciation of natural and cultural heritage. This impressive number can be considered also a force for cultural interaction, mutual understanding, cultural dialogue due to the fact that billions of people from different cultural backgrounds interact daily with other cultures. Never before have so many people been exposed to such a great variety of cultures, cultural heritage places, lifestyles and religious societies as they are today.

In 2014, the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO approved the inscription of the 1,000th site on the World Heritage List, representing 181 countries. The inscription on the World Heritage List is determined by their Outstanding Universal Value (cultural or natural).

In this context, cultural tourism can play an important role in national and international agendas as a tool to promote culture, mutual understanding, social and economic development and to appreciate preservation. The responsible use of cultural assets for tourism purposes can create employment opportunities, stop rural migration, alleviate poverty, generate income for investment in preservation, prompt product diversification and nurture self-esteem and pride within communities around the world. In order for this to happen it is necessary to approach the relationship between tourism and culture in a responsible and sustainable manner. Partnerships between stakeholders should be stimulated, involving local communities and the accent should be put on the safeguard of all types of heritage.

Culture and heritage have an enormous value to host communities and can constitute one of their most important assets in generating tourism. Tourism can also be a force for the appreciation, promotion and conservation of tangible and intangible heritage. As such, arts, crafts and creative activities can be encouraged. One should take into account that in case of poor management tourism can have also negative effects such as physical deterioration, pressure for inappropriate development, traffic congestion, environmental degradation, income inequality within local community, damaging the long term sustainability of the tourism sector.

It is largely accepted that between tourism and culture there are strong synergies. Despite this the two sectors often operate within disconnected governmental and administrative structures and this can result in less than optimal outcomes for regional and national development policies and management.

We should refer, briefly, at the concept of culture. There are many definitions from which we choose the one given by Hofstede: Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. (Hofstede, 1997)

Of course, cultures are not separated but they interact and are in contact with each other, a fact that will influence the development of cultural tourism.

1.2. Cultural tourism

The concept of cultural tourism is very complex and there are debates regarding its definition and conceptualization. One diverse and specific definition is provided by ICOMOS (International Scientific Committee on Cultural tourism): Cultural tourism can be defined as that activity which enables people to experience the different ways of life of other people, thereby gaining at first hand an understanding of their customs, traditions, the physical environment, the intellectual ideas and those places of architectural, historic, archaeological or other cultural significance which remain from earlier times. Cultural tourism differs from recreational tourism in that it seeks to gain an understanding or appreciation of the nature of the place being visited. (ICOMOS, Charter for Cultural Tourism, Draft April 1997)

A cultural tourist is not travelling away from home to reproduce the needs of the home environment in more desirable and advantageous circumstances but is disposed getting to know the different and remote cultures' social and heritage values. As types of cultural tourists we can mention: the purposeful cultural tourist, the sightseeing cultural tourist, the casual cultural tourist, the incidental cultural tourist. The main types of cultural tourism are: heritage tourism, cultural thematic routes, cultural city tourism/cultural tours, traditions/ethnic tourism, event and festival tourism, religious tourism/pilgrimage routes, creative culture and creative tourism. The main directly connected tourism products for cultural tourism are wine tourism, rural tourism and eco-tourism.

Regarding the heritage tourism, upon UNESCO there can be heritage such as monuments, movable, intangible and world heritage. As a consequence we can have material (build heritage, world heritage sites, architectural sites, natural, historical

memorials) and non-material heritage (arts, literature, folklore and cultural heritage sites (museums, libraries, collections, theatres, memories connected to historical persons and event locations).)

From the characteristics of the modern heritage tourists we can mention: they have a higher educational background, their spending is higher than average, tourists are coming from urban, developed areas, the majority are middle-ages and without children, the time for the travel is shorter but the frequency of travels is higher.

The supply of tourism moved towards thematic supply at first in Western Europe in the 1980s, in the USA and Australia and in the second part of the decade in East Central Europe and other regions. The original travel products include highlighted features of rural areas, but in the core of thematic attractions development there is an artificial attraction. (Berki&Csapo, 2008)

The benefits if thematic routes creation are: can be realized with a relatively small investment, can diversify the tourism demand spatially and timely, are able to use unexplored resources, can attract a new demand group in the given attractions.

Cultural routes are the most important segment of thematic routes. Another interesting co-operation of European thematic routes is the European Route of Industrial Heritage

City tourism with cultural purposes is another important segment of cultural tourism. One can consider that there are six clusters with the following characteristics: villages with cultural heritage, towns with cultural heritage, towns with visual and/or performing arts, but no or very limited creative industries, metropolises with cultural heritage, performing visual arts and creative industries.

The European Capital of Culture programme was introduced in 1985 in order to highlight the diversity and richness of European cultures, to celebrate the cultural links which can bring people together, to promote mutual understanding and to foster the feeling of European citizenship.

It is appreciated that ethnic tourism can have two forms: Root tourism and tourism with the purpose of getting to know other people's cultural backgrounds. The advantages of this form of tourism are: can be experienced and studied in almost every part of the world, it provides opportunities for the conservation of culture and heritage, could lead to a more peaceful approach to modern life and the negative impacts of globalization.

Religious tourism and pilgrimage routes can be considered the most ancient form of tourism. There are different groups of tourists with religious motivation such as: organized groups visiting sacred places, individually organized travellers with their own programme, cultural tourists with unique interests, pilgrims attending in an organised way for

spiritual training, pilgrims attending individually for their spiritual training.

Music festivals and events and other forms of fine arts festivals and events (gastronomy, folk, religion, and history) are another form of cultural tourism. Festivals and events act against seasonality, many being organized in the low season.

In recent cultural tourism researches and analyses the terms of creative culture and creative tourism are more and more used. The link between culture and creativity is obvious and it is natural that people involved in creative industries will be linked and connected to culture and culture tourism.

In the 21th century the tourism global market created an interdependent and significant system in which the supply and demand side experiences changed in space and time and from the quantitative and qualitative aspects of components.

Cultural tourism has both positive and negative effects. From the positive ones we can mention: development of the regional culture, protection of the natural habitat, strengthening of the local traditions and culture, can extend the tourism season and can be a form of sustainable tourism. From the negative effects we mention: culture become commercialized, deterioration of the environment, architecture not specific to the local customs, carrying capacity problems, conflict source, cultural tourism has only a dependent role since it needs a package.

The role of cultural tourism is growing but still the position of the classic mass tourism will remain, in our opinion, the dominant form of tourism for a long period. As elements which could influence cultural tourism in the future we can mention: the emergence of new markets in the global tourism industry, agency and participation, competition of excellence. Its future position will probably strengthen directly and indirectly due to changes of the recreational needs of tourists and visitors and a growing demand for cultural travels.

Cultural tourism started as a form of alternative tourism and nowadays can be considered, in some destinations, a dominant part of mass tourism. There is a question if cultural tourism really serves the needs of sustainable tourism. Communities have to face with the degradation of their original culture so there are a growing number of places in search of new forms of articulation between culture and tourism which can help to strengthen rather than water down local culture, which can raise the value accruing to local communities and improve the links between local creativity and tourism. (Richards, 2009)

Conclusions

Tourism is a very important sector of the economy and despite the synergies between culture and tourism they can operate within disconnected or poorly connected governmental and administrative structures. Sustainable tourism can help the

preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. Cultural tourism has the potential to foster cultural development, growth and rejuvenation of urban areas and historic cities.

UNWTO/UNESCO 2015 conference stated that a new partnership will be established between tourism and culture by:

❖ Working towards greater integration of culture and tourism into the post-2016 development agenda.

❖ Reducing barriers and facilitating effective partnership models and governance structures within government at national and local levels, to develop, coordinate and implement tourism and culture policies and practices in a more integrated manner.

❖ Encouraging and facilitating effective partnerships between government, private and community organizations in both tourism and cultural heritage sectors.

❖ Developing cultural tourism policies that recognize, protect and promote the authenticity of culture and cultural heritage and forge effective synergies using a range of appropriate technologies and social media platforms whereby all stakeholders exchange more information, experience and best practice in this area.

❖ Using tourism and culture as a fundamental tool in development cooperation for developing countries and recovery in areas affected by crisis. *UNWTO/UNESCO, 2015)

In our opinion, sustainable tourism should be largely supported and promoted in order to preserve the natural and cultural values that we do have. We should ensure that indigenous and ethnic people and their cultures are respected and that development is done with full participation and through equitable partnerships. People should be linked and sustainable development fostered through cultural routes, closer linkages between tourism, cultures and creative industries should be promoted and the contribution of cultural tourism to urban development supported.

We believe that tourism industry should position itself as a strategic mover regarding planning and incorporating new ideas and technologies and has to apply new multiple market strategies in order to be able to offer different options such as e-tourism. This type of ideas can create new business streams and could strengthen the competitiveness in the future.

Technology improvements modified also components of tourism such as modes of

transportation, destinations, accommodation. Tourism is, in the end, about economics and entertainment, namely making money and having a good time. It is about sea, sand and sun or can be spiritual and this last dimension makes it important for life.

Regarding cultural changes they can augment the real or perceived threats to local communities and may lead to non-institutionalized modes of inter cultural contacts which can represent an imposition upon local or regional communities. In the context of cultural changes generated by information technology and globalization there is a need for an adequate policy framework in order to stop the challenges become inevitable

On the cultural tourism market significant impact can have: the demographic and economic trends (higher level of education a changed role of the women), life-style trends (less leisure time, a tendency for people to spend more time at home), and institutional trends (greater level of competition).

Nowadays, one type of cultural tourism is eco-cultural tourism, which is proposed as a way for communities with scarce cultural or ecological resources to develop. In this respect participation and sustainability are crucial. Eco-cultural tourism can provide also ways to practice archaeology, anthropology and is a model of how cultural and ecotourism could be used by local people to build a sustainable future. In our opinion cultural tourism, in general and eco-cultural tourism, in particular should be sustained and promoted in the near future.

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