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POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPING CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MOSCENICKA DRAGA – the case of historical trails

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Abstract: This paper investigates whether it is possible to impact on the competitiveness of a destination through new dimensions of cultural tourism and by improving the existing forms of cultural tourism. The paper deals with the possibility of upgrading the development of cultural tourism through historical trails. The historical trails from Moscenicka Draga and Moscenice to Trebisce and Perun could supplement the creation of an image for this destination, which in itself has a strong seasonal character, as well as a strong orientation of tourists towards sea- and-sun motivated holidaymaking.

According to the latest research, Trebisce was a place where the old Slavs used to make their offerings to Perun, the Slavic god of thunder. In other words, this is a sacred site of early Croatian mythology. The historical trails can help to differentiate, improve and enrich the tourism offer of Moscenicka Draga as a tourist destination.

The initiator and coordinator of this project is the Chair of the Chakavian Council (an organization dedicated to the preservation of the local culture and the chakavian dialect) of the Municipality of Moscenicka Draga.

Key words: cultural tourism, historical trails, heritage, Moscenicka Draga.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Municipality of Moscenicka Draga, located at the foot of Mount Ucka and boasting a well-known pebble beach, tourism began to develop at a very early date. Developing since the beginning of the last century, today tourism in this region remains a major platform for economic development. Initially, Moscenicka Draga was an excursion site for the rich gentry arriving in carriages from fashionable Opatija to enjoy

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the beautiful beach and pristine nature. "Armanda", the region's first hotel, opened its doors early in the last century. All along the coastline of Moscenicka Draga splendid villas began to sprout, and their wealthy owners brought about the region's first tourist overnights by inviting friends to visit. Today, accommodation facilities comprise two hotels, the "Marina" and the "Mediteran", one motor-camp "I", and an exceptionally large and steadily growing number of rooms and holiday flats in private homes (a total of 2,500 beds).

2. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF TOURISM

Over the past three years, the accommodation facilities of Moscenicka Draga have realised an annual average of 41,000 tourist arrivals and about 174,000 overnights. The distribution of overnights by month indicates that the majority of overnights are realised in the summer months. Seasonality is a very pronounced attribute of overnights in the Moscenicka Draga Municipality.

Tourist arrivals to Moscenicka Draga are mostly motivated by the sea, sun, bathing and sports activities. Efforts are being made to enhance the existing offering with cultural attractions, such as:

1. CULTURAL SUMMER FESTIVAL – a program consisting of various events, festivities, and exhibitions held in the period from 15 June to 1 September. The Tourism Board of the Moscenicka Draga Municipality is the Festival's organiser.
2. VISITS TO THE OLD TOWNS OF MOSCENICE AND BRSES - individual sightseeing of the old town centres.
A project entitled MOSCENICE – A LIVING MUSEUM-TOWN is currently underway. It aims to revitalise the town centre (architectural mapping of the town), create a heritage exhibition, carry out landscape development, renovate the bell-tower and other facilities, and place the town as a whole, with its past, present and future, in the service of tourism. The founder and initiator of this project is the Moscenicka Draga Chair of the Chakavian Council, an organisation dedicated to the preservation of the local culture and the chakavian dialect.
3. VISIT TO THE MUSEUM COLLECTION AND OLD OLIVE PRESS IN MOSENICE – open year-round; visit accompanied by a professional guide
4. VISIT TO THE CHURCHES OF THE MOSCENICE AND BRSES PARISHES – open during services; viewings can be arranged with the pastor.

The cultural tourism offering presented in these programs has changed little over the past two decades, and in repeat visits to this destination, tourists are looking for other, new services and facilities. The present range of possibilities that cultural tourism provides is sure to prove adequate to those tourists whose primary objective of holiday-making involves swimming in the sea, sunbathing and leisure, or those visiting the destination for the first time. The more discerning tourists, however, require more and want to experience other forms of entertainment and do some exploring, especially

during the months when the concentration of cultural events declines with the number of tourists. To enhance the offering, every strategically well-planned and designed offering that meets tourist needs can contribute to increasing the satisfaction of tourists and prolonging the duration of their stay in the destination.

Up to date, there have been no projects that focus on meeting the other interests of tourists. Development efforts have, in particular, neglected those territorial parts of the municipality that are less attractive, in terms of tourism. Lacking a proper strategic plan and action and without concrete support from component institutions, the efforts of individuals are doomed to failure after a few years (for example, the horse farm). Notwithstanding the existing activities relating to water sports, local festivities, cultural events including concerts, performances, etc. and visits to museums, the need to upgrade the tourism offering in Moscenicka Draga is evident.

3. TRENDS IN CULTURAL TOURISM

The needs of modern tourists are changing, growing or being upgraded, to be more precise. Improved living standards and globalisation processes on the tourism market exert a crucial impact on change in the behaviour of tourism consumers. (Vrtiprah, 2006: 280) Over the past two decades or so, a higher educational level and increased interest in cultural attractions, the need for acquiring new knowledge, and even the affirmation of modern tourists through this new knowledge in the society to which they belong have given rise to a greater need of identifying new cultural resources. Cultural resources associated to a destination can be offered as a supplement to the destination's existing holiday offering, or they can be used to create a particular type of cultural-heritage-related tourism attraction that could, through strategic development, become a primary reason for tourist arrivals. To satisfy their interests and needs, tourists travelling for reasons of culture, tradition and history are also willing to spend money in restaurants and hotels, and on auxiliary services and facilities. Growing interest for cultural tourism is also evident in travel agency catalogues, which are increasingly offering travels combined with cultural attractions (for example, 2006 – the Year of Mozart – trip to Austria).

Specific local features should be emphasised as an important element in differentiating the tourism product, as they are an indication of the continuation of history through creation. (Pancic Kombol, 2000: 206) Cultural tourism in Moscenicka Draga is poorly developed, and the wealth of cultural resources existing in the entire area of the Municipality of Moscenicka Draga should be capitalised on and shaped to form one of the basic elements of the destination's tourism product.

The cultural image of a town leaves a lasting memory and generates an element of competitive advantage over other destinations. To create a cultural image, the knowledge and practises of culture management are required, which as a "complex system of specific and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills has asserted itself as a requisite to sound and successful cultural practise and as an compelling factor in promoting overall cultural development". (Hrvatska u 21. stoljecu, 2003: 127) The

most important bodies of knowledge for those engaged in managing the cultural image involve the areas of management, marketing, history, culture and art.

Tourism is about selling an image and an identity. The more distinct an image is from the images of other destinations, the greater the benefit it will have for the destination. Urry asserts that, almost everywhere, identity is derived partially from the image that is generated or reproduced for tourists, including the image of the location itself...located on a global tourism map.(Jelincic, 2005: 61)

Up to date, the primary resources of the destination include the beach and the centre of Moscenicka Draga, together with the old town of Moscenice and its museum. The other 80 percent of the area has remained untouched and unknown. A part of the hinterland overlooking the cove of Moscenicka Draga belongs to the Nature Park Ucka. Established in 1999, the park covers an area of 160 km², encompassing the protected region of the Ucka range and a part of the Cicarija range. Notably, the area of the Moscenicka Draga Municipality has not been devastated by the construction of concrete buildings that have sprouted all along the Croatian coastline.

The role of cultural tourism in prolonging the tourist seasoning and the participation of new geographical areas in the tourism offering are vital to the further development of tourism in the Moscenicka Draga Municipality. Cultural resources could be used as a basis for generating the destination's image or "identity card". By aligning cultural activities with the tourism offering, it would be possible to differentiate the destination, expand the existing offering, extend the tourist season, and ensure a highly enjoyable stay for tourists.

4. THE PROJECT OF HISTORICAL TRAILS FROM MOSCENICKA DRAGA AND MOSCENICE TO TREBISCE AND PERUN

The recent discoveries made on the hills overlooking Moscenicka Draga will definitely contribute to the development of cultural tourism in the municipality. This area encompasses the Nature Park Ucka. During the past few years, scientific research (involving groups of scholars, professors and doctors of science, linguists, indologists, ethnologists and archaeologists), conducted through the Moscenicka Draga Chair of the Chakavian Council, has given rise to sound and irrefutable views backed by scientific evidence of the existence of a Slavic/Croatian sacred site located on Perun Hill (881 metres) at the village of Trebisce (where sacrifices were made to the god Perun). Perun was a Slavic thunder-god, and the word itself means "thunder". That Trebisce was one of the sacred areas of the Old Slavs is evident in the distinct form of toponyms, which have been preserved in this region up to the present day (Perun, Trebisce, Petehova pec, Volovski kuk).

Spreading between Moscenice, Trebisce and Perun, these grounds, sacred to the Croatian people, should be conserved and properly valorised and presented to domestic and foreign visitors as part of our inalienable ethnic spirituality. The past, using the present as a conduit, is infused into the future; thus, the unfamiliar past

becomes a part of the present. Our past is here, all around us, but we need to notice and recognise it. (Vinscak, 2006: 138)

Field research has shown that there were five traditional trails leading from Moscenicka Draga and Moscenice to the Old Slavic sacred area at the top of Perun. These trails were in use at a time when there were no other known means of transportation, and today the rare chance traveller treads these paths that were once the only communication link between the environs and the towns and villages of the coast. All trails led to the shrine in Trebisce, where until some 40 years ago a watermill was in operation, and to Perun Hill, as the central sacred area of the Old Slavs.

Pursuant to regulations on the protection of cultural assets, Trebisce has been registered as an immovable cultural asset – our ethnological heritage. In the spatial plan of the Nature Park Ucka, this region is classified as a highly protected area (run-off area of torrent courses). (Grgurev, 2006: 166)

At present, preliminary work is underway, and documentation is being prepared for the creation of a Museum collection in Trebisce, which would use state-of-the-art technology to present a part of the history of the Croatian people who lived in this region (traces of pre-Christian religion). Trebisce, the central spot, can only be reached on foot. These historical trails would once again be walked upon, as in the time of our ancestors, making tourists a living part of history. This region should be presented through an explorative experience, with tourists becoming the “explorers”.

The historical trails branch out in the following directions:

1. Moscenicka Draga – Sv. Petar – Trebisca (right bank of the stream)
2. Moscenicka Draga – Potoki – Trebisca (left bank of the stream)
3. Moscenice – Pod Matici – Malinski put – Trebisca
4. Grabrova – Potoki – Trebisca
5. Petrebisca – Perun - Trebisca

Realising the historical trail project requires taking advantage of the existing strengths, while minimising and overcoming weaknesses and drawbacks and transforming them into strengths. It calls for exploiting external opportunities, and identifying the risks existing in the environment and their impact on the overall process of strategic development. (Table 1.) The development of historical trails as a strategically set and prepared project has great opportunities, which could lead it to become a successful example of managing cultural, as well as natural, assets.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of historical trails

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural and historical heritage - Scenic spots and landscapes - The existence of trails - Friendly and hospitable approach of residents - Visits possible year-round - Creation of a cultural image - Trebisca and Perun as the central sites 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor road infrastructure - Lack of parking space for large numbers of visitors - Neglected and unmarked trails - Mill and forge in poor condition - Pronounced seasonality
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growing interest in cultural tourism - Convergence to guest preferences - Differentiating, improving and enriching the tourism offering - Heritage protection and restoration - Increase in educational level - Convergence to the EU 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growing competition - Emergence of new service and facilities - Changes to legislation - Lack of understanding on the part of competent institutions - Degradation of the site - Failure of residents to embrace the idea

Source: Author's analysis

5. DEVELOPING CULTURAL TOURISM THROUGH HISTORICAL TRAILS

The Municipality of Moscenicka Draga possesses beautiful beaches and the old towns of Moscenice and Brsec, but it is also capable of expanding its offering to include other examples of natural and cultural heritage.

The realisation of the historical trails project is an opportunity to enrich the destination's cultural tourism offering. To walk along all the trails requires several hours, and the presentation of the trails will need to be dealt with appropriately.

The cooperation of organisations and individuals at the local, regional and national level can lead to the realisation of cultural tourism attractions. A particular role in creating tourism attractions is played by tourism boards, in conjunction with municipalities and associations at a local level, as the management that will create and develop an appropriate offering. All permits for realising the project will need to be obtained. It will also be necessary to locate sources of funding, in the form of either private or public entities that see their interests in this project (funding from the budget, private sector sponsorships, by attracting visitors, etc.)

The target segment consists of tourists vacationing in Moscenicka Draga, visitors from the immediate and extended area, and a certain number of tourists who will intentionally come to visit this unique open-air museum of the Old Slavs. The

manner in which visitors will experience this cultural attraction is of great importance – will they be active participants or merely passive observers. The walk along the historical trails furnished with signposts and promotional material and the museum display should conjure up the way of life in the past and Slavic mythology.

The latest discoveries in the field should be made known to the local population, and their attention should be drawn to the previously unexplored cultural assets that surround them. Without the involvement of residents, neither the interpretation of new research nor the potential development concepts can be expected to bring the anticipated results. It is important to note that creating a sense of identity helps to promote natural and cultural heritage.

In developing and implementing the historical trails project in the Moscenicka Draga region, it will be necessary to

1. Identify, restore and equip historical trails with appropriate signposts.
2. Design promotional material pursuant to the project's marketing plan.
3. Develop a narrative about the arrival of the Old Slavs to this site (based on scientific research up to date).
4. Equip and restore the building that houses the museum collection, as well as the Information Point at the Museum Collection in Trebisce
5. Restore the other buildings in Trebisce (the mill, bridge, blacksmith shop)
6. Transform cultural resources into properly managed cultural attractions, possessing the entire infrastructure required to receive a specified number of visitors
7. Put in place culture management = train the staff needed for project realisation.

Often the presentation, as well as the design, of cultural resources can lead to unexpected and intensive tourist flows. Prior to implementing this project, it will be necessary to make an appropriate economic assessment of the region's carrying capacity, that is, what is the optimum number of daily visitors that the destination can absorb without disrupting its natural and historical harmony.

The entire project should be strategically developed to focus not only on attracting visitors, but also on the coexistence of the domestic population, which present an integral part of the project. This is important especially for the residents living in the target area, that is, in villages along the trails. These residents would also be encouraged to make special efforts in maintaining their gardens and the area around their houses. Cultural tourism needs to become a component of life in a specific area, and not an isolated product.

When considering successful projects and initiatives for developing cultural tourism, it becomes obvious that further development is not possible without initiatives at the local level where the basic cultural and tourism product is generated. (Tomljenovic, 2006: 143)

6. CONCLUSION

Historical and educational trails, featuring elements of Old-Slavic mythology and leading to the sacrificial site at the village of Trebisce and the sacred area of the Perun Hill, are one of the possibilities for developing cultural tourism in the Municipality of Moscenicka Draga. The proper development and interpretation of this project to visitors requires the organised action of all organisational factors at the local, county and national level. The realisation of this project will help to enrich the tourism offering of Moscenicka Draga. It will also provide a better understanding of this region to tourists, whose arrivals are primarily motivated by swimming and sunbathing, and it will encourage the small circle of people, who wish to become explorers of history, to embark upon new explorations. There is no Old-Slavic museum in this region, and this fact presents a primary competitive advantage in realising the project. The realisation of this project will help to improve the quality of the destination, provide it with a richer cultural image, and enhance its position in the competitive environment.

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