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CURRENT TRENDS AND PROSPECTS
OF INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

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CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE ON SKOPSKA CRNA GORA MOUNTAIN AS A BASE FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

The cultural heritage of Skopska Crna Gora Mountain can play a significant role in tourist development, but unfortunately, most of the cultural heritage that Skopska Crna Gora possess is very little or not used at all. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyze the current state and the possibilities for cultural tourism development on Skopska Crna Gora Mountain based on its unique cultural offer. Thirteen cultural sites were singled out based on the degree of their attractiveness for tourism development and evaluated by applying the method of tourist valorization given by the UNWTO. The analysis results should provide information about the major fields of improvement and identify which site requires more attention and better management in the time ahead.

Keywords: *cultural tourism, cultural heritage, Skopska Crna Gora Mountain*

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural tourism has a strong tradition in Europe. Culture has always been a major object of travel, as the development of the Grand Tour from the 16th century onwards attests (Towner, 1985). However, it was in the latter half of the 20th century that cultural tourism worldwide saw its biggest boom, i.e., when tourism and culture have become inextricably linked partly due to the increased interest in culture, particularly as a source of local identity in the face of globalization, the growth of tourism and easier accessibility of cultural assets and experiences (UNWTO, 2018).

Cultural tourism today is one of the largest and fastest-growing tourism markets. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), cultural tourism includes 40 percent of the total number of international tourism trips, and this share is constantly growing at a rate of 15 percent annually (McKercher, 2002). At the same time, experts estimate that more than 50%

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of tourist visits in Europe are motivated by cultural heritage, and cultural tourism has the highest growth rate in the entire tourism sector (Richards, 2011). This is why attracting cultural tourists has become a common strategy for countries and regions seeking to conserve traditional cultures, develop new cultural resources, and create a cultural image (OECD, 2009).

History is one of Macedonia's greatest assets, and we are not wrong when we say that not many countries can match Macedonia's rich and diverse legacy or history. It is one of the oldest civilizations on earth, and on its territory today, there is an abundance of historical places, monuments, and other cultural landmarks. Yet, we tend to take our history for granted, even though our cultural heritage represents a vast potential for the Republic of Macedonia. Sadly these sites are not sufficiently promoted, and currently, they are not adequately used for cultural tourism development (Taleska, 2013). Nonetheless, culture has always been a constituent part of the tourism offer, although the development of cultural tourism in Macedonia has not been systematic and very well planned.

There are many regions on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia that have all the necessary potential for developing this form of tourism product; one of them is the region of Skopska Crna Gora Mountain. The cultural heritage of this area is exceptionally rich, as is testified to by a large number of archaeological sites, a large number of churches and monasteries, old rural architecture, a large number of watermills, cultural and historical objects from recent history, etc. however, if we want to include them in the tourist offer, that requires a quality assessment, careful approach in planning (providing adequate protection), appropriate investments, etc.

Cultural heritage assessment presents an important step in the process of development of cultural tourism development but also for the protection of the cultural sites. When planning sustainable development of cultural tourism at a destination, it is crucial to valorize heritage assets, estimate their value from the viewpoint of tourism because it provides the perspective of whether these assets can be incorporated in the tourism development. According to Stamenković & Jakšić, tourism valorization is a process of evaluation, verification, and ratification of specific characteristics of the destination (Stamenković & Jakšić, 2013). The application of tourism valorization provides a means to develop a destination as a cultural destination without the loss of resources or some other negative impact on the heritage asset (du Cros, 2001). Therefore, this article is focused on (1) identifying, analyzing, and selecting different cultural sites, (2) setting the value of each identified cultural site, and (3) comparing them by using the UNWTO model for assessment. The assessment results should give us a clear picture of the current state and tourist potential of these sites and reveal if there are any major differences between the values and the potential for cultural tourism.

STUDY AREA

Skopska Crna Gora Mountain is located in the northern part of the Republic of Macedonia, between the Skopje Valley in the south, the Kumanovo Valley in the east, the Lepenec River valley in the west, and Kosovo and Serbia in the north. It is characterized by long, round mountain ridges and stony peaks with several deep valleys between them. Its highest peak, Ramno, with 1651 m in height, is located almost in its middle. Skopska Crna Gora Mountain is considered a medium-high mountain covering an area of 836.3 km², of which 459.3 km² or 55% belong to the Republic of Macedonia (Milevski, 2016). The name Skopska Crna Gora

usually refers only to the southern part of the massif, which overlooks the Skopje valley. Other mountain parts are also known as Crna Gora, Karadak, Presevo Mountain, etc.

The region of Skopska Crna Gora has an excellent geographical position because of its proximity to the capital as the main outgoing and incoming market. Its foothills are located around 15-20 km north of the city center of Skopje, and at about the same distance is the intersection between the two corridors (Corridor 10 and Corridor 8) and the Skopje International Airport. Furthermore, Skopska Crna Gora Mountain is highly accessible from its surroundings, i.e., local roads pass through its entire territory, even up to an altitude of above 1000–1300 meters. The proximity of Skopje also determines the profile of its visitors, which are above all pilgrims and one-day excursionists.

The climate of Skopska Crna Gora is pleasant, especially in the summer when the temperature is several degrees lower than in Skopje or Kumanovo. Winters are cold, with snowfall in the higher parts that lasts 2-3 months.

Skopska Crna Gora Mountain, even though small in size, has a huge concentration of various natural and anthropogenic values of vast significance, which with its attractiveness and complexity, offer a high degree of charm and great opportunities for tourism development. Cultural significance in combination with natural and other resources in this area makes this region extremely attractive.

METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this study, four major steps were taken: desk study, field study, analysis of cultural sites, and cultural tourism potential evaluation. A desk study was the first stage of the research, and it includes a study of tourism-related literature and maps and literature of the selected area, i.e., secondary data. Field research was the primary data source for the analysis and evaluation. During the fieldwork, photo documentation was made, each potential site was marked on a map, and GPS coordinates of each site were recorded. After extensive fieldwork, analyses and evaluation of the region followed. Collecting, systemizing, analyzing, and presenting the available data from a methodological point of view was conducted with the use of logically justified and scientifically established methodological approaches.

Although there are different cultural site evaluation methods, the tourist valorization was done base on the quantitative assessment method provided by the UNWTO Model (UNWTO, 2011). This model classifies tourism evaluation factors into two groups: Internal factors (IF) and External factors (EF). The Internal factors (IF) comprise four groups of indicators: urbanization, infrastructure, travel equipment and services, and the inherent characteristics of tourism resources, while the External factors are also divided into four groups of indicators: accessibility of resources, closeness to emissive centers, specificity of tourism resources and the importance of resources.

The Internal and External factors are detailed presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The structure of the UNWTO model

Internal factors (IF)
a. Urbanization - estimate the nature, quality, and extent of equipment resources.

b.	Infrastructure - characteristics of urban and transport infrastructure.
c.	Travel equipment and services - and accommodation facilities, the tourist offer, tourist services.
d.	The inherent characteristics of tourism resources - a type of natural or anthropogenic resources.
External factors (EF)	
e.	Accessibility of resources - adequate road infrastructure.
f.	Close emissive centers - mark concentric zones.
g.	Specificity of tourism resources - comparisons with other resources of the same type.
h.	The importance of resources - image in the market, the volume of tourist demand.

So to obtain the total value, first, we sum all internal factors and external factors, and then the internal sum is multiplied by the sum of external factors, as follows:

$$X = a + b + c + d$$

$$Y = e + f + g + h$$

$$TV = X*Y$$

Where X is the sum of the internal factors, Y is the sum of the external factors, and TV is the total value of the selected site.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Skopska Crna Gora immovable cultural heritage is mostly represented with archaeological sites, old rural architecture, churches, monasteries, etc. However, an official inventory list of all the cultural and historical sites currently does not exist. The archeological map of the Republic of North Macedonia notes more than 40 archeological sites on Skopska Crna Gora Mountain. These numerous archeological sites, dating from different periods, are spread all over the territory and represent rare material evidence of the spiritual and material culture of the people who lived here. Unfortunately, up until today, many of these archeological sites are very little explored, and in most of them, only the type (category) and chronological framework are determined; thus, some more detailed archaeological research has not yet been done. Therefore, even though this territory abounds in archeological sites on such a small area, many of them are not even marked and accessible, i.e., there is no trace of the archeological site. Just an insignificant part of them is visible, arranged, and can be accessible to tourists.

What is most specific about this area are the cultural and historical values represented by the numerous monasteries and churches. They are the main features of this region and are the embodiment of the culture of the population living here, i.e., they testify to the tremendous cultural and spiritual wealth that the territory of the mountain Skopska Crna Gora has. Due to its many religious objects, this area is often referred to in the literature as "Little Holy Mountain." According to the old Turkish records, on the territory of Skopska Crna Gora mountain in 1392, when the Turks conquered Skopje, there were more than 50 temples of God and holy places. Today, many of these religious buildings are well preserved, and they

are generally in good condition, primarily because they have been conserved and restored on several occasions in the past.

Furthermore, there is a large number of watermills found on the territory of the mountain Skopska Crna Gora. Their number is extensive, and they can be encountered on the entire territory. Many of them are small and picturesque but abandoned and left to the ravages of time.

Nonetheless, not every cultural site is suitable for tourism development. This is why a valorization was proposed for sites that are the most attractive for cultural tourism development and have the most significant potential to attract a larger number of tourists. The proposed cultural and historical heritage site evaluation includes twelve sites located throughout the area of Skopska Crna Gora Mountain in North Macedonia. Apart from these, many other sites can be included in the cultural tourism offer. However, in the initial phase of cultural tourism development, more attention should be focused on historically significant sites that possess a high degree of aesthetic value but are also easily accessible and have at least some of the necessary infrastructure for cultural tourism development.

These heritage sites are further described below.

The monastery "St. Elijah – Upper" is located in the village Banjani. The monastery complex comprises the church "St. Elijah," the monastery lodging that is being renovated and adapted for accommodation and visiting, and the monastery fountain whose water is considered healing.

The monastery "St. Nikita" is located between the villages of Banjani, Chucher and Gornjani. First, it was a Byzantine monastery from the 11th century. However, it was later demolished and rebuilt again by the Serbian King Milutin in the year 1307. The monastery complex comprises the monastery church "St. Nikita", an old lodging with a bell called "zvonarija" (the bell tower), lodging-chardak (balcony), bishop's residence, and several smaller facilities (monastery fountain in the middle of courtyard, benches, etc.).

The monastery "Sts. Archangels Michael and Gabriel" (Holy Archangels) is located near the village Kuchevishte. It is believed that the monastery was built in the late 14th century. It constitutes the monastery church "Archangel Michael", the dormitories, a newly built prioress house, and an old barn.

The monastery "St. Virgin Mary" known as Pobozhjanski (Pobushki) monastery is located near the village of Bobozje. The monastery complex consists of the monastery church St. Virgin Mary and the monastery buildings. The church is small and single-nave, arched with a semicircular vault. Based on the historical data, it is believed that it was built in the late 14th or early 15th century.

The monastery "St. Elijah"- Chardak is located between the villages of Mirkovci, Brazda and Gluvo, and monastic life still exists there. Within the monastery complex, there are three churches, the old church of St. Elijah (XIX century), the new church of St. Elijah, and the church of St. Virgin Mary or Balaklija (XI century). Then, there are the lodgings and the tower. In the old lodging, which dates from the XIX century, is located the restaurant Chardak. The new lodging is for the monks, and in the bell tower, there are currently being prepared about ten rooms for all those who would like to experience the spiritual life.

The monastery "St. Nicholas" is located near the village Ljubanci. The monastery complex consists of the church St. Nicholas, the lodging, the bell tower, the monastery fountain, and within the monastery, there is a souvenir shop.

The church "Presentation of the Virgin Mary", also known as "**Holy Salvation**", is located in the village Kucevishte. It is a medieval church built in 1327.

The church "St. George" is situated in the village Banjani and it dates from 1548/49.

The church "St. Nicholas" is located near the village of Ljuboten. It is a medieval church built in 1337.

The only archeological site included for tourist purposes is the first archeological park, "**Archeo Park Brazda**", located near the village of Brazda. It is a fortified settlement, where the central building is an emperors tomb (VII–IV century BC). Today, the park is arranged with a trail, with greenery and informational boards. Although this archaeological site used to have a website: <http://arheoparkbrazda.mk/> where we could find more information about the items in the park, today it is not functioning.

The **watermills** of the Kucevishka river. In the past, around the village Kucevishte, there were approximately 140 mills. Many of them today are gone, and the only traces of their existence are the gizzard stones. Only small parts of the mills are better preserved, and they can be used to enrich the tourist offer of this area.

The hiding place of Josip Broz Tito, is located above the cliffs opposite of the monastery "St. Elijah - Upper". It was discovered in an old wooden hut and today is open for visitors but is dark and unsafe without adequate touristic infrastructure.

These heritage sites were then assessed by using the UNWTO methodology. Using this model and other models, one of the main problems in the evaluation process is objectivity. That is why the tourist valorization grading for the cultural heritage was conducted by eight experts from different areas relevant to this study, two tourism experts, two geographers, one historian, one art historian, and two tourist guides. During the process of choosing the representative sample, special attention was made to be assured that all experts possess the awareness and knowledge about the selected heritage sites. The experts gave their values on a scale from one to four points. Based on their answers, the average marks of each indicator were made, so the site's realistic value of tourist attractiveness is gained. The values for these criteria on a scale of one to four points are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Touristic valorisation of the tourist resources on the territory of mountain Skopska Crna Gora

Factors of the tourism valorisation	Internal				SUM	External				SUM	Total
	The degree of urbanization	Infrastructure	Tourism equipment and services	Inherent resource characteristic		Tourist location and proximity to the emitting centers	Accessibility	Specificity of the touristic resources	Significance of resources		
Touristic attractions											
Cultural/historic sites											
Monastery "St. Elijah-Upper" – v. Banjani	3	3	3	2	11	3	3	3	3	12	132
Monastery "St. Nikita" – v. Gornjani	3	3	3	2	11	3	3	3	3	12	132

Monastery "Ss. Archangels Michael and Gabriel" – v. Kucevishte	3	3	1	2	9	3	3	3	2	11	99
Monastery "St. Virgin Mary" – v. Pobožhje	3	3	2	1	9	3	2	3	2	10	90
Monastery "St. Elijah"- Chardak - v. Mirkovcki	3	3	2	1	9	3	3	2	3	11	99
Monastery "St. Nicholas" – v. Ljubanci	3	3	1	1	8	3	3	3	2	11	88
Church "Presentation of the Virgin Mary" or "Holy Salvation"- v. Kucevishte	3	3	1	1	8	3	3	3	3	12	96
Church "St. George" – v. Banjani	3	2	1	1	7	3	3	3	2	11	77
Church "St. Nicholas" – v. Ljuboten	2	2	1	1	6	3	2	3	2	10	60
"Arheo park Brazda" – v. Brazda	2	2	2	2	8	3	2	3	2	10	80
The watermills of the Kucevishka river	1	1	1	1	4	3	2	2	1	8	32
The bunker of Josip Broz Tito	1	1	1	2	5	3	1	2	1	7	35

Based on the sites evaluation given in Table 2, majority of cultural objects has medium market attractiveness and as such, these values should be promoted in a qualitative way in future. Also, we can see that none of the selected heritage sites has the highest score of 4 in any of the given indicators (Internal or External).

External factors are with higher values rather than the internal factors in all selected heritage sites. Among external factors, a high rating of three was given to all twelve sites in term of the proximity of certain centers for the demand for tourist services and this is simply because of the proximity of this region to the capital city Skopje. Accessibility and traffic connection of these cultural sites are relatively well assessed, because of its location near the international roads and airports although the regional road that leads to these sites are often in poor condition. While the lowest rating for all twelve site was for the indicator of significance of resources, which give as a clear picture that even though we have selected twelve sites which are somewhat involved in tourism, their market image is still unsatisfactory and the volume of tourist demand is small.

Among the internal factors, the highest rating in all sites is the urbanization indicator, followed by the infrastructure indicator, which leads us that the extent of equipment resources is on sufficient level. When evaluating, the lowest scored subindicators with in all internal factors for all observed sites is the indicator for the inherent resource characteristic, which points us to the fact that even though some of them are placed under protection and as such, they are representative and attractive for tourist visits, not all of them can be been

singled out as immovable cultural property of great importance. Also, quite low valorized is the tourism equipment and services indicator. This means that most of the twelve cultural sites need enhancement for this indicator; stronger investments, better management and monitoring, which will contribute for better tourism development and competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

Skopska Crna Gora Mountain region has great tourist potential based on its significant anthropogenic features and heritage, but it still has not created adequate conditions for major tourist development.

The UNWTO model provided the assessment of 12 cultural heritage sites, and the results showed us that there is plenty of room for improvement, especially within the tourist values. More precisely, this refers to the internal factors, especially to the enhancement of the management and planning, as well as investments in tourism infrastructure as a basis for tourism development. Furthermore, with all those improvements and organized promotional activities, these cultural sites could attract more visitors every year, thus benefitting the local community by generating new jobs and revenues for the local economy.

Even though this research delivers valuable information, the research results are restricted only to experts' opinions and evaluation of each cultural site. However, by examining a larger section including visitors of these sites we could give a better picture about its potential for tourist development, which would be a subject for further research of the author.

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