Assistant Professor RENATA FOX, Ph.D
Faculty of Hotel Management, University of Rijeka, Croatia
Hotelijerski fakultet Opatija, Sveučilište u Rijeci, Hrvatska

TOWARDS A RECOGNIZABLE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF CROATIAN TOURISM

Tourism as social practice is inseparable from culture. The position of tourists towards culture is divided. Tourists primarily motivated by culture are not many. However, on the global tourist market this group represents a growing, exceptionally lucrative niche. Accidental and reluctant consumers of culture total some 45%. Through specific elements of cultural offer tourist marketing aims to attract both groups.

A truly impressive and highly presentable national cultural heritage is a key element in the process of Croatian tourism revival and creation of a recognisable identity. The most immediate task is to define a relationship between culture and tourism, i.e. what tourism can gain through culture, how culture can be applied in tourism, and how profitable it is. Investigations of printed promotional materials indicate a lack of fundamental understanding on part of the tourist destination regarding the role of cultural heritage in tourism. This indicates the need for improved private-public sector collaboration and a better understanding of the sociodemographic traits, i.e. national habits and class pursuits of prospective tourists.

Key words: cultural tourism, commercialisation of culture, cultural identity, cultural heritage, authenticity

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Forecasts (WTO 1991) and numerous investigations (MacCannell 1989; Macdonald 1997; Rojek 1997, Rojek & Urry 1997 and many others) have confirmed that tailor-made travel arrangements grow at a faster pace than pre-packed holidays.

More sophisticated customers demand more imaginative tourism products and services, creating increased competition among destinations.

During the past decade a trend towards more engaged experiential active tourism has been manifested: diversification has become a key concept and tourism is evaluated as being a rewarding, enriching and learning experience (Zeppel & Hall 1992). This makes the cultural aspect of tourism, in the widest sense, its main feature.

2.0 THE EVER-CHANGING FACE OF TOURISM

Two very prominent processes have emerged in the tourist industry: diversification and homogenisation. New market niches, special interest tourism, adventure tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism flourish. On the other hand, all sectors of human existence are McDonaldized (cf. Ritzer and Liska 1997). In a way, our vacations have become 'like the rest of our lives' (ibid. p. 100). These two aspects of tourism development seem to be in conflict, but are really just two sides of the same coin.

Often treated as a set of economic activities, tourism is habitually defined in economical and operational terms, as 'involving stays between four nights and one year' (Rojek and Urry 1997:2). This approach concentrates on the, undoubtedly, essential economic motives and indicators of tourism, disregarding various aspects of the tourist experience.

The awareness of the role of cultures and cultural contexts in tourism was decisive in understanding tourism as quest for authenticity (Krippendorf 1984, MacCannell 1989). Presently, tourism is considered in terms of mobility, escapism, adventure and search for new experiences: the new and the different. In a way, travelling itself has become the objective and tourist experience is developing 'towards a condition of pure mobility' (Rojek 1997:71).

In the context of globalization of consumer society, tourism is viewed as a primarily social and cultural practice involving mobility of people and interfacing of various cultures. As Rojek and Urry (1997:1) so aptly put it, 'people tour cultures' (for the notion of 'travelling cultures' compare also Said 1983 and Clifford 1992).

3.0 TOURISM AND CULTURE

In very broad terms culture can be defined as a 'set of socially acquired behaviour patterns transmitted symbolically ... to the members of a particular society' (Wallendorf & Reilliy 1983:667-701), as a 'set of fixed preconceptions, norms, discourses of behaviours ..., an entity located in every day practice' (Bredin 1996:165, 168). In other words, culture is a way of life, related to 'cultural heritage of all mankind', and should be treated as public property (Merryman 1986).

In tourist marketing the concept of culture is used to comprise ethnic and national heritage, tradition, historical sites and buildings, folk arts and crafts, cultural displays, festivals, national and thematic parks, events, etc. This is in line with a prevailing, very wide understanding of cultural tourism, as 'visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region group or institution' (cf. Silberberg 1995:361).

The position of culture in tourism is based on two opposite views: culture is seen as a spatially and temporally fixed entity: a place to visit, and to come back from (Lury 1997:75); but cultures are also in motions: hence the idea of touring/travelling cultures.

Until late 70s a line was generally drawn between tourism and culture. As a result of changes of traditional class structures of post industrial societies, conventional distinctions such as high culture / low culture, public life / private life, work / leisure broke down.

The early 80s saw increased culturization of tourist practices. Tourism acquired a new performative character - tourism was no longer just leisure. It became almost an employment: tourist set goals for themselves which they wish to achieve - a mission to fulfil.

Although some (notably Craik 1997:114) argue that culture in tourism has not changed essentially and that emphasis on culture may be short-term, the interfacing of cultures (compare Rojek and Urry 1997:1-19) has became a key issue in tourism, this par excellence cross-cultural consumption. It is now an axiom that tourism cannot be separated from culture: culture, commodified and appropriately offered, represents a significant part of the tourist industry 'cake'. To focus on the cultural aspect of tourist experience means 'maximising the culture of tourism products, re-defining tourist experiences, addressing the cultural impacts of tourism, and dealing with changing culture of the industry itself ' (Craik 1997:113).

Research into the role of culture in the tourism of the 90s shows that culture is a prime motivation for a minority of tourists: for example in Bywater's investigation a mere 5% (1993:42), in Silberberg's estimate some 15% (1995:362-363). Similarly, investigations into attitudes and consumption habits of tourists visiting Croatia indicate recreation to be the main motive for 81%, and cultural and heritage sites for 9.2% (TOMAS 1994). Priorities are, however, changing: findings of an investigation conducted for *Travel and Leisure Magazine* (cf. Silberberg 1995:363-364) show that in the 90s **understanding culture** became the prime objective for American tourists.

Strictly educational tours to cultural and historic attractions, known as cultural tourism, are considered a 'small but lucrative niche' (Oppermann & Chon 1997:80). Marketing research confirms historical sites and attractions (Middleton 1988:223) as the principal motivations for travelling to certain destinations (e.g. Great Britain). Generally, statistics suggests an increase in this segment (StfT 1993; compare also Silberman 1995).

Tourism can have a great positive or negative effect on culture in the widest sense: e. g. heritage and traditions, way of life, family relations (cf. Cater 1987). The tourist demand for arts and crafts has been known to preserve or even rejuvenate the local crafts industry (Swain 1989; Long 1991). In many cases tourism has instigated a revival of cultural shows. On the other hand, cultural component of tourism may threaten the culture of the destination (Craik 1995; 1997). The overuse of shows for

tourists and modifications of traditions for practical purposes (Stymeist 1996) can diminish their traditional significance (Long 1991).

The overlapping of tourism and culture has created big marketing and economic opportunities and opened an entirely new vista of commercialisation of culture and cultural products. New heritage centres in which heritage is 'made' by copying authentic models, are the best illustration of this process. Heritage reconstruction is supported by various old objects, but practically without any original historical artefacts. The attitude of local people towards such enterprises can be ambivalent (some strongly identify themselves with such representations of heritage, some openly disapprove). In economic terms the new heritage centres are highly successful.

4.0 THE REAL THING

The definition of tourism as quest for authenticity (Krippendorf 1984; MacCannell 1989) has recently become highly questionable. While authenticity definitely remains one of the motifs, it is generally accepted that key incentives in today's tourism and travelling are escapism, adventure, realisation of one's identity, gaze and shopping (cf. Clifford 1992; Craik 1997; Lury 1997; Ritzer & Liska 1997:103).

Due to processes of globalization (political developments, international trade, mass tourism), the line between authentic and inauthentic in culture of tourism has become rather fuzzy. Even if the overt McDonaldization of post-industrial societies and, of course, of tourism were for argument's sake left aside, most cultural forms (especially those which are specific to the host area of destination and in contrast with the guest's cultural norms), are often recoded and prepacked for public consumption (Crain 1996:126).

When asked about their motives, most tourists, especially those higher up the social scale, will claim that they go for the 'authentic' and abhor the 'fake'. A question should, therefore, be posed as to a customers' understanding of the authentic in cultural tourism.

The following account illustrates what a dynamic category authenticity of ethnic identity really is. The example is, I believe, relevant for all, but especially so for countries which are undergoing processes of tourism revival.

In short: native women from the town of Quimsa in Ecuadorean Andes are employed as domestic servants in an international tourist hotel in the nation's capital Quito. Typically, native traditions are rearranged and recoded to achieve a 'marketable semblance', adequate for tourist consumption. BUT: the native women in this story are NOT passive objects: by reshaping their role and by reconstructing their gender and ethnic identities, they exploit social and ethnic stereotypes to their advantage (Crain 1996:125-137).

This story has its good genius (1), a happy ending (2), and a moral (3) which gives it an almost fairy tale quality.

(1) A Mr. Rodriguez, 'an influential Ecuadorean politician and prominent landowner'..., wishing to avoid development of tourism in the rural home community was intent on 'relocating a portion of ... surplus Indian population, which was heavily dependant on his resource base. He assumed the role of cultural broker ... and eventually secured employment for twenty Quimsenas in the tourist trade at the hotel Ray' (ibid. p. 128).

(2) 'Via performances which emphasised their 'cultural purity'... they (Quimsenas) mimicked the dominant stereotypes ... and appropriated the Rodriguez family's name and fame as part of selfhood and group identity...' (ibid. p. 136)

Aware of the elite's obsession with 'the authentic' they (Quimsenas) stage 'performances of their own authenticity'. This authenticity, 'often a parody of elites' expectations', is their trade mark and they use it to warn elites that the streets of Quito are roamed by 'Quimsena impostors' who disguise themselves as Quimsenas in order to get employment in upper-class families (ibid. p. 134-135).

(3) This true story teaches us that the authenticity is what a person perceives as authentic. Use of modified accessories (Quimsenas' dresses, for example, do not conform to the usual dress code of their community; the dress worn on duty are an 'aesthetic purification of tradition') and manipulation of ethnic stereotypes to one's advantage, which nevertheless function as highly charged visual signs of ethnic identity (ibid. p. 131), are typical instances of alternative or staged reality in tourist cultural offer. Crain's report is an excellent example of authenticity recoded (simulated) for public consumption, resulting in approximations, analogues and staging of the real, in the reality which is more perfect than any real 'reality'.

From the culturologist's viewpoint any such (often perfect) simulation is inauthentic. In practice, the simulations (for example, futurist theme parks) have a status of first class tourist attractions, which can produce an entirely satisfying impression (an ecstasy of experience), bring large profits and, what is more, many tourists prefer them to real thing. In fact, tourism very intensively involves the search for the **inauthentic** (Ritzer & Liska 1997; cf. also 1997:Craik; Macdonald 1997).

The most significant long-term benefit of this case, apart from the profit, is that Quimsenas constantly negotiate their cultural identity, thus improving their social status. This process once more confirms culture, authenticity and ethnic identity as dynamic categories in constant interaction with their consumers and other cultures. As argued by Rojek (1997:12), authenticity is simply being extended towards ever-changing tourists' expectations.

5.0 COMMODIFICATION AND COMMERCIALISATION OF CULTURE

The modern materialistic society is probably less materialistic than we have come to believe insofar and commodity is just means to an end, which is an accumulation of reflexive experiences (D. MacCannell 1989:22). Still, the second

half of the 20th century definitely marks the turn towards commercialisation of culture.

Due to the vast cross-cultural contacts, resulting from numerous globalization processes, ethnic cultures and traditions are being intensively commercialised. Considered through 'tourist dimension', the process becomes extremely complex, involving issues such as culture interpretation and conceptualisation (cf. Vukonić 1996). By drawing wide attention to certain communities, 'Marketization of culture' often enables their cultural survival (Firat 1995:116-121; Oppermann & Chon 1997).

Often culture is viewed as an elite category which results in an educational, elevating experience, Consequently, commodification and commercialisation of culture for the requirements of mass tourism tend to awaken fears that contacts of the popular and culture may ultimately result in corruption of culture (Benjamin 1973; Meyerowitz 1985; Baudrillard 1983). This may indeed be so if we accept the assumption that tourism is motivated by the quest for motivation, a search for meaningful cross- cultural understanding and original unspoiled cultural forms as suggested by MacCannell (1989) and Urry (1990).

If we understand tourism as a primarily escape activity, the need for 'ever-new distractions' (Kracauer 1995), the 'pleasure of switching rules practised in our domain cultures with contrasting rules' (Rojek 1997:55, 71), an ego-centric pursuit involving *inter alia* self-delusion through simulacra (Craik 1997:114), any discussion whether cultural offer is authentic or not (cf. 4.0), elite or popular, becomes superfluous. The source of pleasure is the new, the unexplored the different, 'even if artificially constructed' (Rojek 1997:71).

Another consequence of mass tourism and the dominacy of mass media in process of cultural contacts, is the rise of so called kitsch culture (Feifer 1986; Urry 1990), where simulation is almost as interesting as a real object. This, as Rojek argues (1997:70), does not mean that the tourists' prime objectives are kitsch and simulations: by consuming kitsch packaged in authenticity (e.g. *Schindler's List* tour in Poland), tourists sincerely believe that they are being exposed to (as yet) not publicised part of history.

6.0 EXACTLY HOW MUCH CULTURE DO THE TOURISTS WANT

In her study of cultural tourism in Europe Bywater (1993:42) identified three types of cultural tourists: the 'culturally motivated' tourists who choose holidays mainly for their cultural opportunities represents only 5% of the tourist market, about a third of all tourists are 'culturally inspired' (once-in-a-lifetime visit to a special attraction) and about two thirds are 'culturally attracted' (appreciate cultural attractions at destinations they choose for other reasons).

In his analysis of the opportunities for the development of cultural tourism in urban settings Silberg (1995:361-365) distinguishes four degrees of consumer motivation for cultural tourism. All four categories are broken down by resident and tourist status: 15% of tourists (5% of residents) are estimated to be *greatly motivated*, 30% of tourists (15% of residents) are motivated *in part,* 20% of tourists (20% of residents) have *adjunct* motivations (willing to consume culture as addition to another main attraction), and about 20% of tourists (20% of residents) are *accidentally* motivated. 15% of tourists (40% of residents) are not interested at all in cultural tourism.

Although this clearly shows that a highly motivated cultural tourist is a rare bird, global tourist priorities seem to be in favour of culture and cultural attractions. The findings of a poll conducted for *Travel and Leisure Magazine* in 1982 and in 1992 have shown that American travellers made a shift from escapism of the 80s to enrichment in the 90s. The leading motivation of the 80s was spending money (88%), followed by seeing natural beauty (60%) and understanding culture (48%). Priorities of American tourists of the 90s are understanding culture (88%), seeing natural beauty (73%) and gaining a new perspective on life[1] (72%) (ibid. 1995:364).

In conclusion, 'culture vultures' (credit for the term I owe to Jefferson 1995:102) are few and there is comparatively little demand for 'elite' cultural forms. However, most consumers do go for some form of cultural offer. The 'in part' and 'adjunct' consumers are estimated to total about 45% of all tourists, which clearly indicates that the opportunities for combining culture and tourism are considerable.

7.0 CROATIA, A GLOBAL PLAYER

For the objective assessment of the circumstances of culture in Croatian tourism some key facts should be recognised:

- a general decline in Mediterranean share and increased interest for South Africa, Australia, California (Jefferson 1995:102; Chon & Singh 1995:469);
- an increase of city travel within Europe and a noticeable trend towards relatively short holidays with cultural and pseudo-cultural motivations (Jefferson 1995);
- an increase of two age-groups: senior citizens and young people, both demanding culture and activity as a part of destination offer (ibid. p. 104).

This development will clearly force all European (and other) destinations which in the past relied on SSS (sun, sand and sea) concept to develop other aspects of their tourist offer. Host countries, such as Croatia, are expected, through change of attitude and amenity development, to be in line with market trends towards individuality and activity.

In the past Croatia generally put great emphasis on mass tourism without identity (SMP 1996: 46, 79): tourist marketing was focused on natural beauties, sea and climate. Apart from a few destinations (e. g. Dubrovnik and Zadar), hardly any coast resorts built their offer around concepts such as culture, tradition and heritage.

In post-modern societies the objective of historic sights marketing is not so much to increase the number of visitors but to manage demand, thus preventing over-use (Horner & Swarbrooke 1996:280). In developing countries a potential tourists' interest in culture, heritage and lifestyle is seen as a useful addition to the traditional SSS (sun, sand and sea) concept.

In line with global tourist trends and forecasts, the process of revival of Croatian tourism greatly relies on incorporating elements of its truly impressive national and cultural heritage into the tourist offer. Future development of Croatian tourism will put great emphasis on culture, cultural information, tradition, sites and monuments (cf. Vierda 1995). The concept of culture is here used predominantly in the sense of heritage, and national and cultural identity. The key documents in this context are Development Strategy of Croatian Tourism (1993), Main Tourist Industry Plan of Croatia (1993), Croatian Tourist Authorities and Tourism Promotion Act (1994) and strategic marketing plans of individual counties (1996).

As outlined in the stated documents, Croatia wishes to respect the rules of the game: enrichment, heritage, identity,. Two complementary processes seem to have been started: shaping of culture for tourism (i. e. developing specialised products) and shaping of tourism for culture (i. e. modifying tourist destinations to highlight cultural features). Whichever approach dominates, former meek promotional strategies are no longer satisfactory: aggressive resort marketing is needed. This means high (cultural) informativity of promotional material, which very precisely reflects the competitive advantage of the destination.

8.0 A QUESTION OF PERCEPTION

Comparative analysis of Opatija Riviera general resort tourist brochures (Fox 1997) revealed their low (cultural) informativity[2]. What is more, it indicated an essential lack of understanding of the role, presence and offer of culture in tourism. The idea of *new, (culturally) enriched tourism* seems to be torn between ample cultural heritage[3] and organisational, administrative and promotional efforts of national tourist authorities, on one hand, and reluctance of resort tourist offices, marketers and agencies, on the other. On the field, an essential insecurity is felt as to the notion of culture, its role in tourism, selection of cultural elements and way of presentation. In fact, the question *Culture, yes or no?* is still being posed.

Projected against the eight points of evaluation (perceived quality of the product, awareness, customer service attitude, sustainability, extent to which the product is perceived to be unique or special, convenience, community support and involvement, management commitment and capability) on Silberberg's continuum of

the cultural product (1995:362), our investigation into the cultural informativity of destination tourist brochures of Opatija Riviera (Fox 1997) highlights two points as particularly weak: *extent to which the product is perceived to be unique or special* and *community support and involvement.*

Extent to which the product is perceived to be unique or special

Judged from the contents of the analysed brochures (in some cases extremely low cultural infomativity), the vendor does not perceive his product (resort) to be of high quality. We pose a question: if the vendor himself does not supply the evidence which will present his product as unique, how can he possibly expect the potential customer to consider it seriously in his pre-purchase choice?

Community support and involvement

On the executive level (personal communication) of Opatija Riviera hotel industry two attitudes seem to be prevail:

- Resort and hotel industry management and marketing is based on the firm belief that tourists do not want to wear themselves out running about (i.e. sightseeing and being generally active); all they want is a rest. The dominant cognitive frame of those in charge of a tourist destination is still SSS.
- A disparaging attitude towards tourists is generally expressed through questions such as *Who are we offering culture to?,* hinting at the fact that many of our tourists are not in the social class that habitually consumes culture.

Both attitudes represent a reflection of a business acumen of parties engaged in destination tourism: hotel management and local tourist authorities, in short a mirror of society.

Both attitudes bear witness to the lack of understanding of tourism as a social practice, as activity and search for new experiences, and, above all, as a global and cross-cultural process.

9.0 DISCUSSION

As cross-cultural contacts and influences are considered vital for individual cultures and intercultural understanding, culture can no longer be viewed as an autonomous, internally coherent, universe. There is no way and there is definitely not much sense in protecting culture from influence of other cultures: globalization has made cultural borrowing and lending inevitable. Tourism, a social practice that can be realised and evaluated through cultural awareness, cannot, of course, be separated from culture. The question of *tourism & culture* is therefore not: *culture yes or no?* It is rather: *culture definitely, but in what form?*

Cultural capital entails a convergence between tourist and everyday leisure activities and has an enormous financial significance.

As 'culture vultures' represent a minority among tourists, rather than aiming at few members of highly motivated groups trying to expand them, tourist marketing often goes for the most probable customer - reluctant and accidental consumer of

accessible cultural forms (according to some estimates, about 45% of all tourists), such as rock festivals, musicals, art and craft, etc. However, the passionate consumers of elite culture (whatever the term means) should not be neglected: statistically, it is an expanding group.

The range of cultural offer is greatly expanding through the use of alternative reality, modified accessories and simulacra. All cultural sights and events incorporated in the tourist offer are nowadays related to the concept of 'remade cultures'.

The use of alternative reality in the cultural offer is made possible, indeed encouraged, by the fact that the elements of culture offered in tourism are consumed in terms of prior knowledge, expectations, fantasies and mythologies generated in the tourist's origin culture rather than by the cultural offerings of the destination. As a result, authenticity is constantly negotiated in accordance with tourists' expectations.

Two points in favour of the cultural offer in Croatian tourism are the high level of presentability of Croatian cultural and historic attractions and general understanding of authenticity as a dynamic and negotiable category.

Analyses of Croatian destination brochures still reveal material of low (cultural) informativity which is very damaging on all levels (destination, regional and national level), creating images of destinations without identity.

As the principle responsibility for destination marketing lies with the public sector (local, regional and national tourist authorities), a close private-public sector collaboration will be essential for implementation of culture in the Croatian tourist offer as well as understanding of roles that culture can play in maintaining the new markets and enhancing the image of destination.

Learning and understanding what Croatian tourism needs from culture, how to implement it and how to profit by it are the key tasks in rebuilding its identity. Within that context, the dichotomy *elite or mass tourism* somehow seems false.

Finally, culture is a class phenomenon. Tourist destination marketing will have to rely on a detailed sociodemographic research and precise information about national habits and class pursuits of prospective customers.

Notes

1 *If culture is understood as a way of life, gaining new perspective on life through cross-cultural contacts represents an essentially cultural motivation.*
2 *Previous investigations into Croatian tourist brochure (Weber et al 1994; 1996) ascertained that the most analysed promotional materials lack clear objectives and conception.*
3 *The evaluation of a number of Primorsko-goranska county tourist resorts, as compared to Slovenian and Italian resorts, has shown that Croatian cultural heritage is exceptionally rich and presentable (SMP 1996:36).*

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Sažetak

K PREPOZNATLJIVOM KULTURNOM IDENTITETU HRVATSKOG TURIZMA

Turizam, kao društvena praksa, neodvojiv je od kulture, no odnos turista prema kulturi nije jedinstven. Turisti primarno motivirani kulturom čine malobrojnu grupu, koja na globalnom turističkom tržištu ima status izrazito unosne 'niše' i koja je zadnjih godina u porastu. S druge strane, slučajni i neodlučni potrošači kulture čine oko 45%. Specifičnim oblikovanjem kulturnih aspekata ponude, turistički marketing usmjeren je prema objema grupama.

Impresivno i izuzetno prezentabilno kulturno naslijeđe predstavlja ključni element procesa obnove i stvaranja prepoznatljivog identiteta hrvatskog turizma. Bitna je pritom zadaća definirati odnos kulture i turizma, tj. što turizam od kulture dobiva, kako to može primijeniti i pritom ostvariti dobit. Istraživanja tiskanih promičbenih materijala pokazuju da na razini turističke destinacije nerijetko postoji fundamentalno nerazumijevanje uloge kulturnog naslijeđa u hrvatskom turizmu. Očita je potreba za intenzivnijom suradnjom privatnog i javnog sektora te poznavanjem i razumijevanjem sociodemografskih tj. nacionalnih i klasnih obilježja turista.

Ključne riječi: kulturni turizam, komercijalizacija kulture, kulturni identitet, kulturno naslijeđe, izvornost