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Nationalism in Official Tourism Websites of Balkan Countries: A Multimodal Analysis

Abstract

This paper investigates the official tourism websites for the Balkan countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey to learn about their depictions of their nations for an international tourism market. The research combines Pauwels' (2012) multimodal discourse analysis method designed for cultural websites with Smith's (1998) six main institutional dimensions to seek out potential nationalistic patterns involving the state, territory, language, religion, history, and rites and ceremonies. The findings mostly involve verbal and visual signifiers that have a historical context to them such as antiquity, communism, Yugoslavia, religion, irredentism, the Ottoman Empire, and national identity. The findings illustrate that official websites, while being sensitive not to alienate international tourists, portray a sense of nationalism but do so in a different way, based upon the historical experiences and unique features of each country surveyed.

Keywords: nationalism, destination marketing, Balkan tourism, Balkan nationalism, destination websites

1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale

Official tourism websites are influential tools in the promotion of a destination's tourism product (Lee & Gretzel, 2012; Tang et al., 2012; Malenkina & Ivanov, 2018) and can be useful for understanding the values, culture, history, and legacy of a country and the way that it portrays itself to the global market. As Hallett and Kaplan-Weinger (2010, p. 13) explain "as government agencies employ websites to promote tourism to their nations and cities, they serve as mediators of a multimodal array of systems structured with content intended to attract both the interest of and economic input from tourists". Raj and Griffin (2017) state that tourist experiences can have a myriad of different effects on the visitors which may be unintentional but the influence of various tourist experiences and their power to convey a particular narrative has not gone unnoticed by centers of power. Destination management organizations that are government-operated may have a high awareness and grass-roots knowledge about a destination but are often criticized as being politically influenced and not very skilled at marketing (Morrison, 2013). Therefore, national tourism organizations and their messages are worthy of study, since their inadvertent portrayal of nationalism may undermine the intention of marketing and encouraging inward tourism flows.

The UNWTO Code of Ethics in Tourism states in Article 6 that professionals within the tourism industry must provide objective, honest, and balanced information about their destination to tourists which includes information on events and situations in electronic form that can influence tourism flow (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 1999). However, that does not mean that their subconscious biases and

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self-perceptions do not influence their depictions of their own countries. The image that the nation projects to the outside world is important but sometimes this nation branding is unrealistic with images based on constructed and typified myths that may be crafted, elaborated, and even changed (Kolsto, 2017). Naturally, competition is high in European tourism but with this in mind, it may be argued that some countries, often with a turbulent past, may display forms of nationalism when presenting their tourism product in comparison to that of their neighboring regions which share a similar history or culture. While Western European countries have had decades to develop their product, many of the Balkan countries have more recently opened up their borders for international tourism in a region that is ripe with political, historical, ethnic, and religious forms of nationalism. Even countries with a well-established tourism presence and history of tourism development such as Croatia, Greece, and Turkey may be using forms of nationalism based on historical tensions in the Balkans to maintain their successful tourism market. This may create a problem for objectivity and balance for tourism where there are formal and informal barriers that inhibit tourism growth and cooperation, and where each nation has their version of what happened historically within their borders in relation to others of which are also often disputed and is then incorporated into their destination tourism product. Nationalism does not need to exist only within regional tensions to be prevalent in tourism, but may also be manifested as promoting a tourism product that is just better based on historical legacy or modernity that stands out despite the relations amongst neighboring countries.

Previous research by Webster and Ivanov (2016) has already found evidence that political ideologies can influence tourism development and that nationalism plays a role in constructing a tourism product with an emphasis on heritage. With the official online image resting in control of government-appointed officials, the idea that these websites could be promoting forms of nationalism that in the past have caused wars, ethnic tensions, and rivalry is something that calls for further investigation. The assumption that nationalism manifests itself in tourism product development on official tourism websites in the Balkans is complicated to diagnose due to the shared and disputed historical and cultural aspects of the region. Nevertheless, this paper attempts to identify nationalism within official tourism websites and that are defined, according to Encyclopedia Britannica (Allcock et al., 2017), as Balkan nations. For this analysis, Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Greece, and Turkey were identified, since they are clearly Balkan countries. However, Kosovo was not analyzed as they do not have an official tourism website for viewing. Only the English version of each website was analyzed as it is the main language in which national tourism organizations communicate to an international audience. Therefore, what may be lost in translation during the analysis of a community's identity through language that has been translated deserves to be noted as the ties between language and identity are as relevant in the investigation of websites as in any other pursuit from a relativistic perspective (Hallett & Kaplan-Weinger, 2010).

1.2. Aims and objectives

This paper aims to find how nationalism is manifested within the destination websites of Balkan countries. There are two specific objectives. First, the intention is to evaluate how nationalism is manifested on the official national tourism websites in the Balkans based on Smith's (1998) six main institutional dimensions of nations and nationalism as a defining tool and Pauwels' (2012) multimodal discourse analysis framework for websites to categorize and analyze potential nationalistic tendencies. The second specific objective is to categorize the findings based on nationalistic patterns and themes found on the official tourism websites. Nationalism is already a complex idea for one country and this is especially true in the Balkans. All attempts at objectivity were made by the researchers who have made every attempt to not accuse the official tourism websites of any wrongdoing, Balkan atavism (Green, 2016), Balkanism (Todorova, 2009), nor to purposely categorize certain countries as Balkan or under one identity.

This research aims to add to the current body of knowledge on the impact of political ideologies in tourism management by Webster and Ivanov (2016) who foresaw nationalist/conservative resistance movements to be trending in the future and which can currently be seen with Greece, North Macedonia, and Turkey. Furthermore, this work follows that of Hallett and Kaplan-Weinger (2010) who have called for further exploration of official tourism websites as mediums for nationalism due to their potential for manipulation as well as exploring different frameworks that can be used for further analysis.

2. Literature review

2.1. What is nationalism?

While many scholars study nationalism, this phenomenon remains difficult to define. This is echoed by Anderson (2006, p. 3), who states that nation, nationality, and nationalism have proven to be difficult to define, let alone analyze. Grosby (2005) stresses the importance of nations in order to understand nationalism and states that humanity tends to divide itself into distinct, and often, conflicting groups; a sort of "you" vs. "them". However, this type of loyalty and devotion varies in value and definition depending on the people (Brubaker, 2010). Nations are often created over a period of time through a series of cultural and historical events and milestones that are shared amongst its key members.

In the case of nationalism, nations often create a mythology to show that their cultural evolution is either unique or better than others. During this evolution of the mythology, there are a set of beliefs that develop the nation overtime from a piece of land with borders and into a space of meaning that becomes unquestionable with uncompromising loyalty that can often be propagated by political and religious entities (Grosby, 2005). Likewise, this space of meaning is reserved to those that have ancestral claims based on ethnicity rather than inheriting the nation based on place of birth (Grosby, 2005). Once a political entity has planted the seeds of nationalism within an established territory, there is also the task of its organization and operations in everyday society. Tilly (1996) identified two approaches to nationalism: top-down and bottom-up nationalism. In the top-down nationalism, the central rulers elaborate doctrines and use standardized national languages, national histories, ceremonies songs, banners, museums, schools, etc., to shape their visions of the nation. In the bottom-up nationalism political brokers with strong investments in alternative definitions of language, history and community seek supporters in the name of oppressed and threatened nations.

Brubaker (2010) argues that nationalism and their movements are not motivated by material possession but rather symbolic ideologies, dignity, and recognition. This further confuses the definition because nationalism can change from a material to an immaterial possession based on the argument or intended purpose. Bardos (2013) summarizes the standard storylines of constructivist and rationalist theories of nationalism and identity-formation as the manipulation of identities that are fluid, malleable, and endogenous to politics that can be molded by elites, politics, and institutions in ways that are conducive to their purposes and that ethnic-identity formation processes are essentially group competition for resources and interest-maximizing benefits within these group identities. For the purpose of the paper we use the paradigms offered by Smith (1998) often found in cases of nationalism:

- **Primordialism** is the belief that nations are made up of cultural features such as assumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion, and customs. This approach has sensitized man to the intimate links between ethnicity and kinship as well as territory which can generate powerful sentiments of collectiveness (Smith, 1998) and a commitment to the belief that a common ingredient in nationalist ideology can explain the continuity of the nation over time from a remote period (Coakley, 2016). In other words, as humans we are naturally drawn to belonging to a community and form groups based on particular social constructs (Ichijo & Uzelac, 2007). As Lindstedt (2012) emphasizes "primordialism considers a long historical continuity and

distinctness to be both necessary and sufficient conditions for a nation to exist" (p. 118). The underlying principle of primordial nationalism, and its strength, is that a population of a self-identified group of people is immemorial and can be traced to a known common origin which includes race, language, ethnicity, and a homeland. This is a strong factor used by scholars that argue that nationalism cannot be a construct of modern times and that nations and nationalism involve loyalty and emotions that cannot be explained by modernists (Ichijo & Uzelac, 2007).

- **Perennialism** is not looked at in terms of blood-ties but rather that a cultural community is immemorial and has organically taken various forms throughout history, and the idea of being confined to an administrative territory is new whereas the idea of nationhood and kinship is not (Adria, 2009). It looks at the development of a nation over the long *durée* and their long-term components of historical development whether temporally continuous or recurrent throughout history (Smith, 1998).
- **Ethno-symbolism** considers myths, memories, values, traditions, and symbols as the main features in the formation of national identities with myths of the 'golden age' being of particular importance (Grosby & Leoussi, 2007). It looks at a nation's symbolic legacy of ethnic identities and how these myths, memories, sacred territories, collective destiny, and nostalgia for a golden age are used by modern nationalists for re-discovery and reinterpretation. However, the problem that Smith has with ethnosymbolism is that it can be difficult to prove, in the Middle Ages for example, that these type of ethnic and regional ties were even present at all within large peasant communities and if it tied them to their prospective nation (Smith, 1998).
- **Modernism** in accordance with Anderson (2006) is the idea of an imagined political community composed of a population that will never meet everyone within it, yet they share a common sense of community and comradeship that is inherently limited with finite boundaries and is sovereign (Anderson, 2006, pp. 6-7). It shows how nations, and notably their elites, have united state populations in order to cope with modern conditions and political imperatives (Smith, 1998). This can be thought of as a mix of the previous three categories, but with an *à la carte* approach when it comes to the selections used by elites, or even media, to promote national sentiment to particular groups.
- **Postmodernism** looks at "the fragmentation of contemporary national identities which suggests the advent of a new 'post-national' order of identity politics and global culture with recent analysis on fragmentation, feminism, and globalization that can be seen as continuations of components of the modernist paradigm and provide significant advances in understanding the dynamics of identity in plural Western societies" (Smith, 1998).

2.2. Nationalism in the Balkans

Tismaneanu (2009) states that no political dream has proved more resilient and enduring in this past century than nationalism; a comprehensive and potentially aggressive constellation of symbols, emotions, and ideas that can offer redemptive language for long-subjugated or humiliated groups. While there may be several theories and interpretations on Balkan nationalism, Ortakovski (2013) explains it as they strive for a "greater state" with Greece, Bulgaria, and Albania wanting an identity free from Turkey, Romania and Serbia wanting to destroy Austro-Hungary, while Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia's greater states involve fighting over Macedonia, combined with the unfortunate fact that most of the Balkans states could only achieve this "greater state" at the expense of each other.

In the Balkans, the populations generally wanted their independence from Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian rule after hundreds of years under foreign occupation, but there was the question for just how to do this and what political unit(s) would result in. The complications in the Balkans are due to the ethnically diverse societies where class and ethnicity are closely associated (Roudometof, 2001) whereas in most of Western Europe, class structures existed but were not tied to ethnicities or religion (or at least not to the same extent as

seen in the Balkans). When the region began to break away from these aging and crumbling empires, Balkan nationalists, usually political elites, used antiquity and continuity based on ethnicity, language, and religion. Maier (2016) takes this obsession further by emphasizing a fixation on having borders as their symbolism for the love for one's country (see also Storm, 2018). Although this phenomenon appears to have been taking place for centuries in the Balkans, like most European nations, nationalism did not come into being until the 19th century and was at its peak at the beginning of the 20th century. This time coincides within the time frame of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in which nationalism within the region most likely became problematic in the fight for land when Bulgaria was liberated and Greece, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia doubled in size (Malešević, 2012). To exacerbate this quest for independence, there were interventions by foreign powers in the form of treaties, two world wars, and the regional Balkan wars that each involved hostile nationalist groups claiming ownership over particular territories based on ethnicity and history.

According to Ortakovski (2013) "the concept of 'balkanization', the division of a region into small antagonist states, came into being because the formation of states on the Balkan Peninsula was accompanied with mutual conflicts due to ethnic or territorial problems, and represents a synonym of the divisions and atomization of the Balkan region". These territorial disputes are not only with neighboring countries but within borders and communities, most commonly seen among the three principal religions Eastern Orthodox, Catholics, and Muslims. As the Ottoman empire left and the break in the 'continuity of nations' was restored, this break left behind Islamic populations which, for most nations in the Balkans were a cultural reminder of defeated political overlords. Todorova (2009) explains this by suggesting that much of the Balkans self-identities were created as a defense against their oriental past with the Ottoman legacy, but can also be in reference to orientalism within the region today which is one of the factors that lead to the breakup of Yugoslavia. However, research conducted by Roudometof (2001) found that nationalist movements in the Balkans were not solely cultural-ideological but due to socio-economic changes, opportunities for military mobilization, and revolutionary movements. At the end of World War II, the Balkan states, namely the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania, except for Greece and Turkey, fell under communist rule until the 1990s (Wachtel, 2008). However, the imposition of the Soviet system helped to repress nationalism in the various ethnic different groups for some time, especially in Yugoslavia (Lane, 2004).

Yugoslavia was a special case, in many ways, since its state felt threatened by the West's strong anti-Soviet and anti-communist position (Dzalto, 2018). At the end what caused the collapse of Yugoslavia and the war was a crisis of central authority, economic instability, and nationalism. This war was the last on European soil in the 20th century, and while tension is still in the air, the main focus now is to either become an EU member or act as an EU state. Even though the wars have ended, there is still Balkan nationalism playing out in the media at the time that this paper was written with nationwide protests and a debate over the name changing of the Republic of North Macedonia. This involves the EU, Greece, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia arguing about the historical continuity of the involved countries over the name "Macedonia", which has caused outrage amongst the Greek government, orthodox church, and Greeks (Kitsantonis, 2018). This debate over Macedonia only exacerbates Balkan hyper-nationalist sentiments that inhibit total peace within the region. This is controversial today due to the name debate with Greece who has a region called Macedonia and for the Greeks the name has taken on a totemic symbolism which is wrapped up in their history and identity (Kakissis, 2018).

2.2. Nationalism in Balkan tourism

While it can be argued that nationalist ideas are reserved for political and social discussions, politics influence laws regarding tourism and tourism regulations. So while nationalism in Balkan tourism may not directly cause a war or conflict, it may be used in a way that aggravates this already delicate relationship. Kaplan-Weinger (2010) believes that tourism is now becoming a catalyst for promoting a country's nationalism. Hall (1998)

also adds that the global trend and popularity of cultural and heritage tourism has coincided with regional heightened awareness of nationality, nationalist antagonism, and a reinvigorated sense of historical perspective in South-Eastern Europe. Although nationalism in Balkan tourism is not yet widely researched, there are some examples of it affecting the industry. Looking at former Yugoslavia, there are lingering sentiments from the war which negatively affects the image of Serbs amongst some Croats who want the names of streets, city squares, and museum displays with Serbian affiliation to be removed (Goulding & Domic, 2009). This was also the case for the Yugoslav leader, Josip Broz Tito, where his name was removed from a square in Zagreb due to pressure from the country's right-wing party which is also protesting the museumification of his yacht in Rijeka (Squires, 2018).

Research on the major tourist sites of Mostar and Sarajevo that were ravaged by the war found that categorizing them as thano-touristic / dark tourism attractions (Vázquez, 2018) brings about challenges such as oversimplification and conceptual reductionism in order to fit into its given label which may not be welcomed by those looking for peace from those hard times (Causevic & Lynch, 2011). Kosovo is important to Serbs on many levels, even for tourism purposes, as the 1389 Battle of Kosovo made the region into a sort of "Serbian Jerusalem" with the Serbs mythicized as the chosen people (Erjavec & Volčič, 2007). Research in Greece on the promotion of World Heritage sites in cooperation with the Greek National Tourism Organization concluded that their officials have an emotional involvement in tourism as an imagined community with an emphasis on religion, symbolism, nationality and nationalist ideologies rather than rationality (Kavoura, 2007). A study, specifically on Slovenia's official tourism website, found that Slovenia attempts to reinforce its image of being historically and culturally a part of "civilized" Western Europe by emphasizing its historical past with central Europe, the Habsburgs, the Alps, and contiguity with Austria and Italy (Borko, 2017). North Macedonia's efforts to be linked with antiquity have inspired government-funded campaigns with the international slogan "Cradle of Culture" and "Macedonia Timeless" which has not only outraged neighboring Greeks but also the ethnic minority Albanians within the country that are not a part of this grand continuity, and also with the many Macedonians that view themselves as Slavs and not ancient (Vangeli, 2011). Additionally, the raising of monuments of Bulgarian historical figures (e.g. Tsar Samuil, the Miladinovi brothers, etc.) and assigning them 'Macedonian' nationality has caused much tension with Bulgaria. In Bulgaria itself, since the communist regime was declared criminal in 2000 many communist monuments have been removed and the few that remain are seen as taboo and most tour operators will not organize trips to these sites (Ivanov & Achikgezyan, 2017). Even popular attractions for westerners like that of Dracula are a sensitive subject as it has cartoonized the national hero of Romania, Vlad Tepes (Tănăsescu, 2006). Nationalism that is either politically or socially motivated is affecting the Balkans on national and regional levels. But for the purposes of this paper, we will be looking at the government sponsored websites in search of potentially nationalistic sentiments.

3. Methodology

3.1. Multimodal discourse analysis

This paper adopts Pauwels' (2012) multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) that was developed for analyzing websites as cultural expressions. Multimodal discourse analysis has worked for other researchers with similar topics such as Krisjanous' (2016) exploratory research of dark tourism websites and Hallett and Kaplan-Weinger (2010) who offered thorough explanations on the various forms of content analysis for official tourism websites. An additional attraction to this method is the use of modes and semiotic modes which looks at the text, not just in the linguistic sense, but the message's visual, verbal, and spatial meaning in terms of that culture's history and social values (Kress, 2009; Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). This was important for the research as the official tourism websites often contained photos, videos, sound, and layout options. Pauwels (2012) also provides "a 6-phase framework of website signifiers that contain a structural repository of cultural signifiers

and a methodology for finding their implicit meaning" which will be applied to this research (see Table 1 for a detailed explanation of the phases). The appeal of this method is that it is designed for websites that encompass more than just verbal signifiers which is important as Krisjanous (2016) emphasizes to view each website as a complete or holistic communication were the multimodalities combine to create overall meaning.

Table 1
Phases in Pauwels' multimodal discourse analysis

Phase	Description
1. Preservation of first impressions and reactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the website "looks and feels", initial reactions! This step is meant for recording the first impressions about the look and feel of the website. These recordings were important as it gave the opportunity to view the website from a tourist's standpoint but also to see if the websites seem nationalistic at first glance or if they require a more in-depth look.
2. Inventory of salient features and topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collected and categorized certain features and attributes, or modes, and main content categories of the websites, as well as a negative analysis of omissions or features that are missing which may lead to cultural taboos. Also watched out for patterns, difficult to find categories, as well as omissions of traditional tourist information or information that pertains to the country profile. From this step, the salient features that dealt with nationalistic topics were recorded and used in the discussion, analysis, and interpretation of data section. Some of the websites have more information and features, therefore an in-depth analysis of areas dealing with prominent cultural and sociological touristic features such as tabs featuring general information, history, culture, heritage, about, facts, attractions, museums, religion, society, people, regions, villages, cities, 'top 10', 'must-see' highlights, and any other tabs that will assist in the research process were considered.
3. In-depth analysis of content and stylistic features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An intra-modal analysis of any verbal/written, typographic, visual representational type, and sonic type signifiers, as well as layout and design were conducted. Followed by a subphase analysis of cross-modal interplay that included: relations to visual and verbal signifiers, relations between sound and visual signifiers, all possible interactions between typography, layout, and design versus text, visuals, and sound. To determine which texts are appropriate, Smith's 6 Institutional Nationalism Dimensions were used as a guide along with various historical and cultural references from books, journals, and online newspapers.
4. Embedded point(s) of view or "voice" and implied audiences and purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A POV analysis with an audience and a goal in mind was not always possible to determine, however it can be useful to look at the website's language options, funding, government and political sponsorship, website creator, authors, and other signifiers that may help. In this case, the study was conducted only in English.
5. Analysis of dynamic information organization and spatial priming strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most government run official tourism websites tend to be quite vast in information and some of the newer websites may be quite modern and interactive. For this step, the researcher analyzes the architecture of the website to judge its organization and determine if the layout and features are presented easily to the viewer or if whether certain information is harder to find; i.e. site map, eyecatchers, more featured information that takes up more space and attention.
6. Contextual analysis, provenance and inference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding the most significant cultural indicators, why are they cultural expressions, what is their significance, and is it based on any nationalism. Aside from looking at the grammar of these websites, this research also looked at the authors in terms of the sponsors, political parties, and any other organizations attached to the websites.

Source: Based on Pauwels (2012, pp. 255-259).

3.2. Smith's six main institutional and cultural dimensions of nations and nationalism

Pauwels' MDA method allows for a wider range of empirical investigation of these websites, however, the author also warns that while this method does provide a relevant framework for understanding websites' cultural differences between countries, cultures, and ethnicities "more will be needed in order to determine the cultural meaning of the signifiers" (Pauwels, 2012, p. 248). The author also warns of the burden of looking at every detail on the websites and therefore recommends seeking the aid of a framework based on previous research (Pauwels, 2012). In this paper the authors adopted Smith's (1998) six main institutional dimensions that allow historians and sociologists to compare differences in the modern and pre-modern sentiments of nationalism in a nation:

- **The State:** This looks at the politics of the country that can allow for comparisons between earlier kinship and the more recent polyethnic democratic state. In terms of the Balkans, their politics have changed so drastically recently that this step is crucial in looking at their current state but also the ties, if any, to their former state; i.e. communism, Yugoslavia, the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires.
- **Territory:** With this step, the author allows for a comparison to territorial attachments in regards to ancient, medieval, and modern histories. This type of attachment was seen in the recent dispute between the Republic of North Macedonia and Greece over the name of Macedonia. Smith (1998) recommends this step due to the idea of historical, sacred, and ethnic territories as a principal element that constitutes a homeland for particular nations.
- **Language:** One must not forget the importance of the attachment to language and its ties to what constitutes a nation. This step allows the researcher to look at the influence of language on national feelings and its ethnic attachments, however, all of the websites for this paper will be looked at in their English form.
- **Religion:** Given the sensitivity to religion and its ties to ethnic groups and territorial claims throughout many countries in the Balkans, this step is crucial given that many of the touristic sites in the region are places of worship. Smith (1998) stresses a comparative study of the influence of current religions and belief systems to previous ones, and also to look at the influence of religious institutions and holy sites in propagating these beliefs and sentiments.
- **History:** Naturally historical sites play a major role in Balkan tourism, and Smith (1998) recommends comparing the forms of historical consciousness and historiography of various nations and looking at how this sense of history was vital in the creation and maintenance of ethnic communities and nations with a concentration on ethno-history and "golden ages". In such a historically diverse region that has gone through such drastic changes in the modern era, it was interesting to see what was considered historical in terms of tourism for each nation and if whether or not it is pushing a particular narrative.
- **Rites and Ceremonies:** In terms of creating a collective identity, both currently and historically, it is important to look at how ceremonies, festivals, symbols, and rituals are represented on each website. Naturally, a tourism website will showcase various forms of ceremonies, but Smith stresses that particular attention is needed when looking at aspects such as origin myths, ancestral monuments, and the commemoration of fallen heroes from pre-modern and modern society.

The English versions of the official destination websites of the Balkan countries were analyzed based on these six dimensions. Once the texts were collected from the websites (in June 2018), they were categorized under recurrent themes found across the websites and then were discussed. Table 2 provides the list of the official tourism websites included in the analysis. It should be noted that data were collected before the Republic of North Macedonia changed its name.

Table 2
Official tourism websites

Country	Website	Responsible organisation
Albania	http://albania.al/	Albanian National Tourism Agency
Bulgaria	http://bulgariatravel.org/en	Ministry of Tourism
Bosnia & Herzegovina	http://www.bhtourism.ba/eng/	Tourism Association of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Croatia	https://www.croatia.hr/en-GB	Croatian National Tourist Board
Greece	http://www.visitgreece.gr/	Greek National Tourism Organisation
Macedonia	https://macedonia-timeless.com/	The Agency for Promotion and Support of Tourism in the Republic of Macedonia
Montenegro	https://www.montenegro.travel/en	National Tourism Organisation of Montenegro
Romania	http://www.romania.travel	Ministry of Tourism
Serbia	http://www.serbia.travel/	National Tourism Organisation of Serbia
Slovenia	https://www.slovenia.info/en	Slovenian Tourist Board
Turkey	http://www.goturkeytourism.com/	Ministry of Culture and Tourism

4. Results and discussion

The following results are the salient features which appeared frequently on many of the websites in which nationalism manifests itself.

4.1. Antiquity and continuity

Out of the various forms of tourism, there may be no other that is as culturally significant as the discovery of antiquity. This begins in 17th century Western Europe when young upper-class men would embark on a tour of the classics and antiquity in Southern Europe known as the Grand Tour which was essential in the elaboration of discourses on national identity (Cohen, 2001) and overall culture of the individual. Ever since this time, antiquity has played an important role in destination attractiveness. If managed correctly, this in turn gives the impression of a long history and continuity that links this ancient sophisticated society today. Nixon (2010) states that nationalisms produce and reproduce national narratives that give the impression of an entity that moves flawlessly from the past to the present, and into the future. Moreover, nations, especially in the 19th century, created "imagined communities" and traditions based on the careful appropriation of the material legacy of the glorious past (Anderson, 2006; Winter, 2012), which continued to this day and countries like the Republic of North Macedonia search in the antiquity for the source of their nationality. Throughout the Balkans, most official tourism websites mention, even if briefly, their countries' links with the past and antiquity which are an obvious pull factor for tourists. As a tourist attraction, one can see that countries like Greece have done incredibly well, more than any other country in the world, with not only their tourism product but mostly their international image and association with antiquity. While the influence of antiquity on modern national identity amongst natives may be questionable, it seems to work on a touristic level for some of the Balkan countries and has been implemented into their tourism websites.

Bulgaria on an international level may be associated with its more recent past as part of the socialist bloc, yet with the banning of communist relics, the country's official tourism website has prided itself on its lineage with antiquity with an unusual amount of information for a tourism website (see Table 3). This is nothing new, however, since the country has made a focus on antiquity since the fall of the Ottoman Empire like in most Balkan nations. Marinov and Zorzin (2017) found that Bulgarian archaeology and research in the humanities shows a vernacular primordialism with references to blood ties, naturally inherited cultural traits, and national spirit associated with the Thracian civilization that has played a sociopolitical role in the formation, ethnicization, and re-legitimization of Bulgaria for most of the last century and a half. In the context of their official tourism website, it can be argued that Bulgaria expresses some perennial nationalistic tendencies as it excessively portrays itself as a very ancient country which, like Greeks, can give the impression that Bulgarian culture is tied in with antiquity, or as Smith describes as perennial: "persistent, immemorial with a history that stretches back for centuries with an authentic culture and ancestral ties" (Smith, 1998, p. 22).

Table 3
Antiquity

Example
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Bulgaria > History: "The territory of Bulgaria has been inhabited since antiquity, as the country's many ancient settlements and burial mounds attest."▪ Bulgaria > History: "Present-day Bulgaria was a cradle of some of the earliest civilizations in Europe..."▪ Bulgaria > Lifestyle and culture: "Lifestyles and cultures in what is now Bulgaria have developed over thousands of years." "The Slavs and proto-Bulgarians were greatly influenced by the cultures of the Thracians, Illyrians and Greeks, and all peoples who resided on these lands – Thracians, Romans, Slavs, and Bulgarians – have contributed to the world's cultural heritage."▪ Bulgaria > Lifestyle and culture: "It is no accident that the earliest European civilization grew up here."▪ Bulgaria > Tourism types > Cultural tourism: "Bulgaria is a country with thousands of years of history and a cultural heritage that embraces ancient civilizations."▪ Bulgaria > Tourism types > Sites under aegis of UNESCO: "Bulgaria is a successor of ancient civilizations - Thracians, Romans, Byzantines and proto-Bulgarians have left on these lands exceptionally valuable artistic and architectural evidence of their advanced culture. They are scattered throughout the country and make it one of the most attractive destinations for people, interested in history and culture."

Table 3 (continued)

Example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greece > Capital: "Athens is the historic capital of Europe as it has been inhabited since the Neolithic Era". "Hence, Athens became the core of western civilization, while many Greek words and understandings such as democracy, harmony, music, mathematics, art, gastronomy, architecture, logic, Eros, euphoria and many more, enriched various languages and inspired different civilizations." ▪ Greece > History: "Today's visitors to Greece have the opportunity to trace the "fingerprints" of Greek history from the Paleolithic Era to the Roman Period in the hundreds of archaeological sites, as well as in the archaeological museums and collections that are scattered throughout the country." ▪ Greece > Culture > Museums: "Greek culture is one of the most emblematic in the world. The habitation of Greece from deep pre-history, the miracle of classical Greek culture, the glory of Byzantium, and the country's modern history excite the imagination." "The wealth, depth and significance of this lasting Greek culture are on display in countless museums scattered across the country. Museums are arks of memory and memory in Greece reaches far back in time." ▪ Greece > Culture > Archaeological sites: "Greece is literally a vast archaeological site. As the country was already inhabited from prehistoric times, traces of human civilization can be found everywhere, in all corners of the land." "People from all over the world come to see at close hand the origins of western civilization and to feel the power and vitality exuded by these sites." "The major archaeological sites in Greece seem to stand outside and beyond the reaches of time. They have been recognized as cradles of humanity and the excitement one feels when strolling along their ancient pathways is indescribable." "Greece offers the world over 100 outstanding archaeological sites."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Turkey > Destinations > Cities in turkey > Istanbul > About Istanbul > Istanbul at a glance: "If the world were a single state, Istanbul would have been its capital. Yet neither words nor any amount of reading or listening are sufficient to truly describe with the city." "Istanbul, the capital of empires, the city that dominated continents, the cradle of civilisation, the meeting point of cultures and civilisations. These are some of the thousands of phrases that describe Istanbul" ▪ Turkey > Destinations > Cities in turkey > Amasya: "Welcome to Amasya, the city where history was written. Amasya is a typical Turkish city, like an outdoor museum with its history of 7500 years, natural, historical and cultural assets." ▪ Turkey > Regions of Turkey > Central Anatolia Region: "The cradle of civilization. The lands of Anatolia are full of countless remnants of civilizations that graced these lands for hundreds of years. Whatever corner we turn, it seems that we come across the signs of yet another civilization that once dominated Central Anatolia region with its own very unique culture and belief system." ▪ Turkey > Things to do and see > Attractions and culture > Historical places: "Throughout its long history spanning over 10,000 years Anatolia, the land that is now Turkey has been the birthplace of many great civilisations and empires all of which have left their mark in unique ways." ▪ Turkey > Regions of Turkey > Southeastern Anatolia Region > Mesopotamia: beyond a land (video): "we started this here [...] this is where we found our religion [...] we laid the foundations for the sciences here [...] we began to write the saga of civilization here [...] the place where the story began and continues to endure."

Winter (2012) recognizes the role of ancient material traces and archaeology have assisted in the Greek national memory and imagination in which "classical antiquities with all of their symbolic associations, provided a mythological foundation upon which the modern nation could be constructed." He also echoes the belief that countries like Greece aggressively push their monumental past in order to attract tourists and their money which then enhances the profile of the national imagery via their archaeological and architectural sites. Therefore, it is not strange that the official destination website of Greece makes numerous references to Antiquity (see Table 3). This has been seen before in previous studies on Greek national identity in tourism where the Greek National Tourism Organization described their heritage with emotionally charged words that reinforce the sense of belonging to a common place and an awareness of history in relation to national identity while also initiating cultural activities that are associated with world-known heritage sites (Kavoura, 2007).

Constructing a national identity is a question of representing a particular uniqueness with biological, cultural, and religious 'purity' as the main aspects for preserving national unity and thus protecting it from both internal and external enemies (Gokay & Aybak, 2016). In 1834 the Acropolis became the political symbol of a new modern Greece that connects them to Ancient Greece, and any remnants of Ottoman or Byzantine legacy found on the site were removed (Cuno, 2011). Hence, today when thinking about Greece as a destination, one thinks of sea, sun, and Ancient Greece. It can be even difficult to go to any Greek restaurant in the world without seeing a picture of the Parthenon or go to any major art museum without seeing the influence of Greek antiquity. While this has been an advantage for Greece's immediate inclusion to the EU and for tourism, Gonzalez-Vaquerizo (2017) argues that it also comes at a price to the point where it is inescapable

and Greeks are having to sacrifice their modern history and identity for that of long gone antiquity. Greece's official tourism website expresses perennial nationalistic tendencies, according to the description by Smith (1998), by boasting its lengthy historical antiquity, that is persistent and immemorial with authentic culture and ancestral ties, in association with national and western identity at the sacrifice of its more modern culture and giving the image of continuity between the past and the present..

Similar to Greece, Turkey's official tourism website displays nationalism verbally by boasting of the grandeur of their history (see Table 3). Since 1884, any antiquities found within the modern political borders of Turkey are deemed state property, as well claims of ownership over anything Ottoman that is found within the former Ottoman Empire, and in light of the struggles with the formation of a modern secular state have also cast a light on Mesopotamia, Persia and others (Cuno, 2011). In an effort to establish a new national identity, Atatürk focused aligning Turkey's new national identity with Anatolia that would amalgamate their identity with thousands of years of Anatolian cultural history (Cuno, 2011). In looking at this trend, a study on museums in Ankara and Istanbul showed that 'the museums' representation of the ancient past can be considered in the context of the nationalist theories: here the antiquity displays can be seen as serving a wider political agenda of constructing Turkey as a "cradle of civilisations" in opposition to Europe, and where the antiquity displays were appropriated by the government as a tool to instill a sense of national identity in the Turkish peoples (Savino, 2011). To go even further, Gökay and Aybak (2016) found that scientists were employed by state-sponsored efforts under Mustafa Kemal to find an identicalness between the Turkish race and European 'whites' by verifying that ancient Turks were the real ancestors of the modern Aryan race and thus pursued to downplay their Ottoman – Islamic past for a narrative more in line with Western history. While the Ottoman legacy is mentioned on the website, there seems to be a larger focus on antiquity and Turkey being present at the birth of civilization. Therefore, it can be argued that Turkey's official tourism website displays perennial nationalistic tendencies, in accordance with Smith (1998), as a destination that is rooted in antiquity and immemorial with keys words like 'the cradle of civilization'.

The debate over the promotion of antiquity to form a tourism identity will more than likely never be settled as it works as a branding tool that will only increase over the next several years with the rise in cultural niche tourism. In a business sense, one could hypothesize that in the long term it is detrimental for the official tourism websites of the Balkan nations as these countries tend to be very competitive with each other over their historical legacies. This combined with the tourism market becoming larger every year, we may see antiquity disputes amongst these nations, especially with Bulgaria, Greece, Republic of North Macedonia, and Turkey.

4.2. Ottomans

The overwhelming theme amongst all Balkan official tourism websites is the presence of the Ottoman empire. The Ottoman past remains one of the most controversial historical subjects for the Balkans and still today any historical discussions about that era can ignite bitter and far-reaching debates about national identity and historical memory in the region (Hajdarpašić, 2008). In a nationalistic sense, it seems to be preferred to either downplay the influence of Ottoman culture in certain countries and for others to defame them as part of the makeup of their nation's identity. It can be argued that the reason for the disdain for Ottomans could be due to the fact that they were occupying the region and this interrupts the continuity of their identity as "European". Venetians, Austro-Hungarians, Byzantines, and modern Western European nations all play a part in some form of occupation or influence in modern times within the region and they are not categorized in the same negative light. Cull et al. (2003) explain that most Balkan countries spread nationalistic anti-Ottoman propaganda revolved around epics of resistance and praised heroism for those that preserved their language and religion during this era and these became a basic premise of almost all national mythologies within the region. With this in mind, it could also be argued that the disdain comes from orientalism and the lasting mark of Islam in a region that is European which is often synonymous with Judeo-Christian cultural influence and values.

It could be assumed that out of all the Balkan nations that would praise the Ottomans, Turkey would be one of them. Although the official tourism website for Turkey has a section for Ottomans and mentions their cultural influence, there seems to be a preference to focus on antiquity rather than the Ottomans. As Ganggaloff (2005) explains that in the period of the 1990s, on a political level with foreign policy, the Ottoman legacy was still subject to speculation but there appeared to be no irredentism and no real nostalgia for the Empire in Turkey. For the other websites, it seems that the Ottomans are an interruption in the continuity of identity that links their current heritage to that of pre-Ottoman times, except for North Macedonia and Bosnia & Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina's official tourism website was the most enthusiastic about the Ottomans (see Table 4). This is a very controversial move on the part of the Bosnians as it is evident that the country's Serb and Croat populations condemn and reject the "Ottoman yoke" making the acceptance of Bosnian Muslims problematic as they share a South Slavic ethnic origin yet are tied to the Ottomans via religion (Hajdarpašić, 2008). Yet, they did enjoy a privileged existence under the Ottomans as opposed to the Serbs and Croats (Babuna, 2004). But according to Jovanovic (2017), the Bosniaks by the end of the 20th century viewed Turkey as a sort of 'big brother' and have mostly been seen in a positive light in the country in opposition to their neighbors. While it may not be nationalistic on an international scale, the overwhelming consensus in Balkan countries is that the Ottomans left a lasting negative influence throughout the region, and to go against that narrative, whether it is true or not, holds some controversy within the Balkans. The sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population and its popular participation we can argue that Bosnia and Herzegovina's official tourism website displays ethno-symbolic nationalistic tendencies that "re-discover memories and values in the face of the problems of modernity" Smith (1998), which in this case the "modernity" is the negative stigma of Ottoman history in the Balkans.

Table 4
Ottomans

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- **Albania > Homepage > Famous Albanians:** "On the top of the list for sure is the National hero and ruler of Medieval Albania Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, he lead the small Albanian nation and unite the people under an resistance of 25 years against the Ottoman Empire that was the strongest army of that era, for that he deserved a gold place in history and around 150 books, operas, paintings ect was made about his figure from Renaissance times until nowadays. He was one of the greatest generals and strategists of the medieval era."
-
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina > The heart-shaped land > Religion:** "The Ottomans first arrived in the region in the fourteenth century, and over the next two hundred and fifty years Bosnia saw a significant portion of its population convert to Islam." "Despite the heavy influence of the Ottomans, Bosnia and Herzegovina remained a very multi-religious state."
 - **Bosnia and Herzegovina > Sarajevo Region > Sarajevo the City > History:** "One of the distinctive features of Ottoman rule was tolerance of other religious creeds, particularly compared to the wretched record of religious persecution by most European powers of that time. The Orthodox, Catholics and the Sephardic Jews (expelled from Spain in 1492 and resettled in Sarajevo) lived and worked together in relative harmony in the Bascarsija quarter. This laid the foundation for the cultural pluralism for which the city is known today." (Sarajevo History, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
 - **Bosnia and Herzegovina > Central Bosnia Region > Travnik:** "The Ottoman era renewed the glory of Travnik. It was the principal city and military centre of the Ottoman Empire. It was from here that the Ottomans planned their invasions further towards the southwest. They brought mosques, religious schools, roads and water systems."
 - **Bosnia and Herzegovina > Northwest Region > Banja Luka:** "The Ottoman governor for Bosnia had his headquarters here for a while, building bridges and mills, and in its Ottoman glory days the town had some 40 mosques."
-
- **Bulgaria > About Bulgaria > History:** "At the end of the 14th century, the country was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. In the first years of Ottoman rule there were scattered attempts to liberate the country. Later the Hayduk movement created the preconditions for an organized national liberation movement." "The Bulgarian Revival began at the beginning of the 18th century, when the Bulgarian church, educational institutions, and culture were re-established. The beginning of the organized national liberation movement to throw off the Ottoman yoke is marked by the activities of Georgi Rakovski (1821-1867), and key figures in the liberation movement are Vasil Levski (1837-1873), Lyuben Karavelov (1834-1879), Hristo Botev (1848-1876), among others." "In April 1876, the April Uprising took place. This was the largest and the best organized attempt to liberate Bulgaria from Ottoman domination. The uprising was brutally suppressed, but it placed the struggle for Bulgarian sovereignty at the center of international political discussions."
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Table 4 (continued)

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- **Greece > History > History of drama:** "After the Ottomans conquered Drama in 1383, the Muslim population of the town increased, whereas the Christian one decreased, as the Greeks left the town for the mountainous region." "The heavy taxes, the maladministration of the "Agas" and the frequent raids resulted in the inhabitants feeling insecure and a deceleration of the agricultural economy growth until the beginning of the 18th century."
 - **Greece > History > History of Nisiros:** "The **Turks** looted Nisyros at least four times until 1523 when they subjugated it and together with the other surrounding islands, brought it under the peculiar, privileged regime of the "maktou""
 - **Greece > History > History of Heraklion:** "In 1669, it fell into the hands of the Turks, which with the heavy taxation and the continuous humiliation at the expense of the Christians subjected cruel living conditions onto the Cretans."
 - **Greece > History > Rethymno:** "During the Cretan revolution of 1866 the epic of Arcadia was written when its warriors, commoners and monks, blew themselves up so as not to surrender to the Turks."
 - **Greece > Where to go > Destinations > Greek islands > Ionian islands:** "The presence of the Europeans on the Ionian Islands at a time when Greece was still under Ottoman rule gave rise to significant intellectual activity something that is still visible today both in the islands' architectural tradition as well as their charming cultural traits." (Ionian Islands)
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Bulgaria and Albania mention the Ottomans in order to reference their national heroes (see Table 4). Contrary to what Serbs believe, the Albanians did not welcome Islam/the Ottomans and that they had a long resistance to them with the help of their national hero Skanderbeg (Ardolic, 2008). This can be considered an ethno-symbolic form of nationalism, according to Smith's definition (1998) as the anti-Ottoman sentiment both communally and politically is reinforced by the promotion of these individuals for shared historical memories and the symbolic legacy of ethnic identities.

Greece's official tourism website (Table 4) possibly has the most negative stance on Ottoman history in their country which can be considered ethno-symbolic as it reflects a sense of solidarity for a significant sector of the population and their symbolic legacy. This has also been concluded by Heraclides (2011) who states that Greece has self-identified as the country where civilization and history come from which has created a sort of arrogance and defensive nationalism where they must classify the Turks /the Ottomans, as the antipode in order to maintain their status as the cradle of civilization.

4.3. Communism

Communism, while miniscule in context to the vast and varying histories in the Balkans, is intrinsically entwined in the minds of residents and visitors to the region. Even though this era has ended and some states have implemented lustration laws to do away with forms of communist influence today, there still remain countless memorials and cultural heritage monuments that are linked to communism. States develop their policy towards cultural heritage on the basis of a value that informs decisions about what remains of the past are worth preserving and therefore cultural heritage is an indispensable asset in post-conflict recovery process when there is a rush to redefine the emerging state and its citizens ((Viejo-Rose, 2013). However, with the transition from communism to democracy in the 1990s, questions about attitudes towards the controversial communist past divided societies (Ivanov & Achikgezyan, 2017; Naumov, 2019). While it would be profitable for the region to promote their communist past (Ivanov, 2009) there are obvious issues. Caraba (2011) takes the example of 'Red tourism' in China with week-long itineraries that are focused on the glory of Mao and his regime whereas in Eastern Europe such an itinerary would be difficult given the disputes over the positive and negative sentiments towards communism, especially now with countries that are trying to erase their recent past in the hopes of creating a new EU identity. As there is a demand for communist heritage tourism in the Balkans (Ivanov & Achikgezyan, 2017), and some countries are either ignoring their past, banning the past, or not pushing it to its full potential, it could be argued that these actions may resemble modern nationalism when referring to Smith's definitions of nationalism as "a social and political movement to achieve the goals of the nation and realize its national will" (Smith, 1998, p. 72) and "a nation constructed by elites who seek to influence the emotions of the masses to achieve their goals" (Smith, 1998, p. 22). While the "goal" is debatable, it may pertain to these countries will to either become an EU state or to integrate into their new role as an EU state. While communism plays a major role in the modern history of most Balkan countries,

for the purposes of this paper we have divided the findings for communism and Yugoslavia into two separate categories. This category will focus on the communist countries that were not a part of Yugoslavia.

The information on communism on the official tourism website of Romania is limited (Table 5). This can be argued to be a form of modern nationalism as it ties in with coping with the modern political imperatives (Smith, 1998) with Romania's lustration laws and the overwhelming belief held by the West that communism is bad.

Table 5
Communism

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Albania > Homepage > History: "The end of World War II brought into force the Stalinist regime of Enver Hoxha." "For about 50 years, the totalitarian regime followed a policy of isolation, leaving the country in economic poverty and totally isolated from the international community. Its economic policy was based on the principle of "relying on its own forces", by banning loans and credits from abroad. This situation continued until 1991 when Albania, as a consequence of new winds that blew in Eastern Europe, eventually emerged from isolation."▪ Albania > Homepage > Communism legacy: "Integrated into the Soviet sphere, Albania entered a period of profound isolation from the rest of the world." "What followed from 1973 to at least 1975 was a reign of terror against Albanian writers and intellectuals, comparable, in spirit at least, to the Stalinist purges of the 1930's. These years constituted the major setback for the development of Albanian culture. A series of purges kept other sectors of society, indeed the whole population, in a state of confusion and insecurity." "Though a definitive judgment on the Asocialist" period in Albania will have to be left to historians and political scientists of the future, the legacy of 46 years of Asplendid isolation" under Marxist-Leninist rule seems to have bequeathed the country with little more than universal misery and a backward economy."▪ Albania > Homepage > History: Enver Hoxha is mentioned as a dictator twice and there is a photo of Albanians cheering as his statue is torn down.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Romania > Why Romania? > History and culture: "Communist rule in Romania was one of the most repressive and brutal regimes in Eastern Europe characterized by numerous crimes, torture, deportation. From former landowners to students, from priests to intellectuals, from political opponents to the peasants who refused to give the land to collectivization, they all became enemies of the new regime which did everything possible to annihilate them. Two terrible decades follow, in which hundreds of thousands of people lose their lives in communist prisons."▪ Romania > Why Romania? > History and culture: "Internationally Romania's history is better known after the Second World War as part of the socialist bloc, because of the excesses of the former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. Although he had won the appreciation and help from the West when denouncing the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the USSR as a result of the Warsaw Pact (1968) and although he had transformed Romania in the first country of the eastern bloc that had official relations with the European Community (1974), Ceausescu attracted international opprobrium by embracing the cult of personality through Asian branch and by constantly breaching the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens."
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The official destination website of Albania also expresses a form of modern nationalism as the communist rule is mentioned quite often (Table 5) and is usually met with disdain which goes along with modern political imperatives with "elites that try to influence the emotions of the masses to achieve their goal" (Smith, 1998, p. 22). The website advertises some attractions that pertain to communism. For example, The Bunk'Art 1 and 2 are large bunkers that have been converted into museums and there are thousands of bunkers found throughout the country that are seen in photographs with beautiful scenery on the website. The National Historical Museum advertises the Pavillion of the Communist Terror which was opened in 2012 which showcases Albania under communism, cleansing operations and special courts against anti-communists. The House of Leaves is advertised as a museum dedicated to the Sigurimi that was the security agency under communism and their operations. Verbally, there are several references to communism as an oppressive era.

Tourism can contribute to contestation that is played out on a much larger scale and advance less than benign forms of nationalism (Winter, 2012). Although there are laws for lustration, Romania and Albania have taken the approach of at least mentioning communism on their official tourism websites. In the case of Bulgaria, there is little mention of the era. Although there are many communist and socialist monuments in the country, the tourist will not find any of them on Bulgaria's official tourism website. This can be considered a form of modern nationalism, where elites seek to influence the emotions of the masses to achieve their goals (Smith, 1998), in the sense that they dissociate from that time period for modern political imperatives which may be why they focus heavily on antiquity. The most famous Bulgarian communist monument in the country, and known internationally, is Buzludzha which has gained popularity on social media and is featured on

international lists as an endangered historical monument. Although it has been mildly acknowledged by the government that the site carries monetary value via tourism, the topic of saving and restoring even partially a communist monument is still too dangerous for politicians. A prior study has indicated that some strata of society are willing to donate money for the restoration of the monument (Poria et al., 2014) but hardly anything has been done in this direction. Unfortunately, the socialist monuments are heavily politicized amongst Bulgarians, even outside of the government, and therefore the divide on sentiments towards this 45-year period impedes their incorporation into the tourism supply (Ivanov & Achikgezyan, 2017).

4.4. Yugoslavia

The breakup of Yugoslavia may possibly be one of the most nationalistic events in Balkan's history at the end of the 20th century, which stemmed from smaller forms of nationalism in terms of ethnic, religious, and territorial ideologies amongst smaller groups and their allies. The former Yugoslav states that are historically, politically, and socially complex are still in the process of creating their tourism brand identities in a region where nationalism has had devastating effects and nation branding can be considered as a way of avoiding their pathologies by bringing longstanding competition into the realm of the marketplace (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011). Of course, tourists must be curious to learn about this war or at least to know if the region is safe to visit two decades later. In looking at the former Yugoslav countries' official tourism websites, there were differences in how the Yugoslav war was displayed. However, the majority of Yugoslav content was found with Bosnia and Herzegovina and can be interpreted as nationalistic in a territorial sense.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's official tourism website (Table 6) mentioned the war and Yugoslavia more than the other former countries, however it has nationalistic tendencies in that it seems to define a large portion of their touristic identity. Seen above with their support for their Ottoman past, this war was problematic for Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country with a large Muslim population that was in contrast to Serb and Croat society. Amongst the three nations, Bosnia and Herzegovina makes an attempt to mention the three groups within the country by showing their differences and similarities, such as the mention of Serbo-Croat as the regional language which was created by the Serbs and Croats as an attempt to ethnically and religiously separate themselves from Bosniaks (Jovanovic, 2017). It can be argued that the official tourism website for Bosnia and Herzegovina expresses both perennial nationalism "as a politicised ethno-cultural community with common ancestry", yet also modern nationalisms as "a nation divided into social groups based on region, class, and religion with their own interests and needs" (Smith, 1998, pp. 22-23).

Table 6
Yugoslavia

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- **Bosnia and Herzegovina > The heart-shaped land > Language:** "There are three 'official' languages spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. For the local people there is a great importance attached to the name of the language. For practical purposes, they are one and the same." "The pre-war language of the former Yugoslavia was Serbo-Croat. This term is virtually extinct now. **Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian** is a Slavic language." "In the Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina many signs will be in Cyrillic, including road signs which may make it difficult to know exactly where you are. In the Federation only the latin alphabet is used."
 - **Bosnia and Herzegovina > The heart-shaped land > Economy:** "Before the war..." "because of the war..." "Ever since the Dayton Peace Accords were signed at the end of 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been in a long, slow and painful process of economic recovery. The reform process has been slow for a number of reasons. There is no tested recipe for the economic revitalisation of a place that left the world economy as part of a centrally planned country and re-emerged as a war-torn independent country in a competitive free market economy. It is simply not known what such a country should do to adapt. And yet, not all is bad."
 - **Bosnia and Herzegovina > Herzegovina Region > Mostar:** "When the Stari most, or Old Bridge, collapsed from tank shelling in 1993 it was like the heart was ripped out of most Mostar natives." "Even mentioning the bridge for years after it fell to the bottom of the Neretva River could invoke tears as it symbolized both the city and the country as a whole."
 - **Bosnia and Herzegovina > Northeast Region > Srebrenica:** "Not long ago the memorial cemetery was opened in Srebrenica. The memorial centre is a beautiful and touching place. Life may be returning to normal in Srebrenica, but the women and children who survived will continue to live their lives without their brothers, fathers, husbands and friends. Despite its tragic past, the beautiful dense forests that line the hillside or the plethora of bears and wolves that roam the wilderness to the southeast of town are certainly a site to see. Go to Srebrenica. There are nice places to see in and around Srebrenica."
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Table 6 (continued)

- **Serbia > About Serbia > History: "1945-1980:** Josip Broz Tito, as Yugoslavian President, leader of the Communist Party and supreme commander of the Yugoslavian People's Army, through skilful diplomacy during a time when the world is divided between the Warsaw Pact and NATO, manages to secure Yugoslavia a favourable position in international relations."
- **Serbia > About Serbia > History: "1999:** NATO air forces, supporting Albanian secessionists in Kosovo and Metohija, bomb the FR Yugoslavia over a period of three months. A great number of civilians also killed as a result of the bombing of targets in Serbian cities. Kosovo and Metohija becomes a UN protectorate as part of the Kumanovo Agreement. Around 300,000 Serbs flee Kosovo and Metohija."

In terms of war heritage, it is challenging to strengthen people's identification as a nation while also considering the antagonists into the commemorative arena (Naef, 2017), which Bosnia and Herzegovina seem to do carefully. As seen with the Serbian Republic's de facto capital Banja Luka in the northwest of the country, the city's history profile on the website has no mention of the war or the conflict in the city which saw the destruction of several Ottoman and Muslim sites. To be fair, this seems to be an issue for all official tourism websites in the former Yugoslav states.

The shift in attitude and values that a society undergoes from the result of a conflict can be seen in which historical sites, people, or histories they actively pursue in remembering and celebrating (Viejo-Rose, 2013). According to Suligoj (2016), Croats are torn on the sites and many still visit these places but to them it is not considered a touristic activity. In the example of Croatia's official tourism website, although the region of Slavonia is promoted, the country does not promote Yugoslav war tourism or war sites like Vukovar on an international level even though the town tends to be popular with local tourists. This may be due to the fact that after the war, tourists were afraid to come back to the country due to its recent violent conflict and therefore since have participated in an invisibilization of the war with intense self-image reshaping policies in order for its industry to overcome that is specifically targeted at foreign customers (Arnaud, 2016). The same has been done for Slovenia, Montenegro, and the Republic of North Macedonia that seem to be separating themselves from the former state at least in a touristic sense. While these countries have every right not to mention Yugoslavia in their tourism product, there must be a curiosity amongst tourists that want to learn about this time period, therefore it can be considered a modern form of nationalism as they choose to limit the tourism offer from this era. There is also little mention of Yugoslavia on the official tourism website for Serbia, although when mentioned there is a subtle disdain for western politics (see Table 6).

4.5. Irredentism

Shifts in territorial boundaries and property regimes in the post-socialist regions of Europe have made political boundary-making and heritage production reminiscent of romantic nationalism (Taylor, 2009). Irredentism is the claim over a territory based on national, ethnic, or historical ties (Ambrosio, 2016). Nearly all Balkan countries claim, whether publicly or privately, that they have lost territory that is rightfully theirs. It was not originally hypothesized that irredentism would be a factor on the official tourism websites but it was apparent on that of Serbia (see Table 7). Kosovo became a self-declared independent and partially recognized state in 2008 with over 100 countries acknowledging their independence along with several Balkan nations except for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Romania, and Serbia. Kosovo is considered as part of Serbia's southern region and was the base of the early Serbian Orthodox Church and seen as the Serbian Heartland (Erjavec & Volčič, 2007). In fact, during the 1960s and 1970s the Serbian Orthodox Church was considered as the lone domestic carrier of Serbian ethnic nationalism and officially named the ancient Serbian shrines in Kosovo as "debts to God and symbols and monuments of the Serbian people" which tied these shrines to Serbian ethnicity (Perica, 2002, pp. 123-127). A 2017 survey on Kosovo amongst Serbs found that most don't consider Kosovo as a priority for Serbs, they have no intention of living there, and it is an inhibitor for Serbia's inclusion into the EU (Zivanovic, 2018).

On a political level, Serbia has made several pleas to the UN to deny UNESCO membership to Kosovo due to the destruction of hundreds of Serbian religious and cultural sites since the war (Nikolic, 2015). The

deliberate destruction of historical monuments is appalling but with several major countries already recognizing Kosovo as independent, listing the region on Serbia's website is reminiscent of the Seven Rules of Nationalism (Kaufman, 2001) where regardless if it was theirs for 500 or 50 years, or whether there is a minority or majority living there, it still belongs to the person claiming it due to historical necessity and the idea of the 'cradle of the nation' (Ortakovski, 2013). Nevertheless, the mention of Kosovo and the disdain towards Albanians and western intervention on the website can be considered nationalistic in an ethno-symbolic sense, "how modern nations reinterpret the symbols, myths, values, and traditions of their ethno-histories in the face of problems of modernity" (Smith, 1998, p. 224), as the idea of an independent Kosovo takes away a part of Serbian religious, historical, and territorial identity, and still remains a controversial issue in terms of cultural heritage for Serbians which can be seen on their official tourism website (Table 7).

Table 7
Irredentism

-
- **Serbia > Destinations > Cities and municipalities > Pristina:** "Pristina is the capital and largest city of the **Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija** and is its economic, cultural and university centre." "Around 40,000 Serbs left Pristina following the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999." "Pristina is located in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija which is currently under the administration of UNMIK (the UN Interim Mission in Kosovo)."
 - **Serbia > Destinations > Mountain resorts > Brezovica - Sar Mountains:** "The Sar Mountains are located in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija which is currently under the administration of UNMIK (the UN Interim Mission in Kosovo)."
 - **Serbia > Culture > UNESCO lists > World cultural heritage > Mediaeval monuments in Kosovo** (*Decani, Patriarchate of Pec, Our Lady of Ljevis, and Gracanica are Serbian religious sites located in Kosovo*): "These mediaeval Serbian monuments are in the autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija, which is currently under the **administration of the UN Interim Administration Mission (UNMIK)**. Since 2006 they have been entered in the **UNESCO List of world heritage in danger**, due to the unstable security situation prevailing in the province. After the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in **1999**, and the arrival of the international KFOR peacekeeping forces in Kosovo and Metohija, Albanian extremists have either destroyed or severely damaged more than **100 Orthodox churches and monasteries**. Some Serbian Orthodox monasteries survive only thanks to the courage and dedication of their monks and the military protection of international peace-keeping forces. The monasteries can only be visited under the military escort of KFOR troops."
 - **Serbia > About Serbia > Society > Language and alphabet:** "Ethnic minorities have the constitutional and legal right to officially use their languages and alphabets in the areas they inhabit. In the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija the **ethnic minority languages** of Hungarian, Slovakian, Croatian, Romanian, Rusyn and Albanian are in official use."
 - **Serbia > About Serbia > Society > Population:** "The last census in the **Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija** in which the Albanian ethnic minority took part (and where the majority of the Albanian minority lives), was carried out in 1981, meaning that accurate population statistics are unavailable."
 - **Serbia > About Serbia > Society > Safety:** "Bear in mind that the territory of Kosovo and Metohija is currently under the administration of UNMIK (the UN Interim Mission in Kosovo) and travel is not recommended without organised KFOR protection."
 - **Serbia > About Serbia > Facts > Territory:** "On the basis of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, Kosovo and Metohija has been under the temporary civil and military administration of the United Nations since 10th June, 1999."
-

4.6. National identity

Aside from the themes mentioned above, it was expected that at least some of the countries would display a form of nationalism in terms of highlighting their national identity as a competitive advantage for visiting the country. A pattern can be seen throughout the majority of the Balkan official tourism websites where they showcase themselves as countries with great history both ancient and modern. However, in the case of Croatia, Slovenia, and Montenegro, they display a pattern of focusing on the touristic sights of their countries rather than history. For countries like Croatia that are powerhouses in the tourism industry, it seemed odd to not only stray away from lengthy historical information but also to concentrate most of their product along the coastline. While there were options for tourism activities in the northeast region, there were more options listed for the coastline and more of a focus on beach and coastal life via the photography on the official tourism website. Croatia's tourism offer is more focused on the coastline with about 95% of all hotel accommodations for the country which shows the valorization for this particular region and not the inner mainland (Grzinic, 2010). However, their tourism website recently used the popular Croatian football team (July 2018, post World Cup) in a promotional video that promotes only Slavonia, Zagreb, inland national parks, and hiking trails. While there is promotion for inland activities there appears to be an overwhelming emphasis on the visuals of the coastline attractions. In accordance with Smith's paradigms, this can be interpreted as mildly

nationalistic in a modern sense as "the nation is a creation and is consciously and deliberately built by its members or segment thereof" (Smith 1998, p. 22) and the website encourages visitors to visit the coastline.

The website does an excellent job at showcasing the major attractions of the country as well as categorizing them into niches, even though they also have an Interactive Map of Croatia, the overwhelming theme of the website is niche tourism. With this website set-up they have been able to avoid parts of Croatia's story in regards to having a 'history' and 'about' tab. In doing so, much like Slovenia, Croatia does not have to mention anything about Yugoslavia or its dark past. The country has reinvented itself as a beautiful beach destination, often at the price of mainland Croatia and especially the area of Slavonia which is heavily populated by Serbs and where most of the monuments of the war are located such as the infamous town of Vukovar. However, it can be argued that this is smarter in terms of not only tourism but for moving on and the peace process in the Balkans where for years each country just wanted their own identity. As Jenne and Bieber (2014) point out that the citizens of (post-) Yugoslavia, for example, have continually faced a choice between the identity promoted by the titular or regional elites, the identity of cross-border kin or homeland states, the identity of national minorities, and the identity of the civic or federal state. During times of political upheaval, the competition between these identities became more intense, leading to marked identity shifts and (sometimes) political cleavages where none existed before.

In looking at Balkan identity in media, Slovenia's attitude towards the Balkans are perceived as a turbulent neighboring region that begins just beyond the border of Slovenia while Croatia views the Balkans as some place that is definitely not in Croatia (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011). Slovenia's official tourism website is focused on representing the country as a green destination with various natural and cultural heritage activities. "In the example of Slovenia, nation branding represented a shift from official, state propaganda to reliance on a commercial campaign (and the private-public partnership that develops it) for building a sense of national identity both at home and abroad" (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2011, p. 614). The country's website has taken on the same form as that of Croatia in the sense that they promote niche tourism and do not have a country biography tab that boasts their vast history from antiquity and former glory. This is part of Slovenia's brand strategy, according to an interview conducted by Volcic and Andrejevic (2011), that includes the Slovene opinion on how to historically and culturally represent their country's identity by advertising what is important to them: nature, unique villages, lively folk culture, and charm. A previous study by Borko (2017) found that Slovenia's official tourism website is focused on its "green" label which ties into the landscape and everything associated with it which could stem from the country's desire to break away from Yugoslav ideals and to find its own distinctive identity. The considerably modern nationalistic narrative of Slovenia's desire to be seen as a destination that is not part of the Balkans and more connected to the international community is evident through verbal signifiers with mostly "green" context as mentioned by Borko (2017). In using the paradigms provided by Smith (1998) it can be argued that the website expresses modern nationalism because it is "consciously and deliberately built by its members and segments thereof" which ignores history and stresses the image of 'green' landscapes. But there are a few other signifiers on their official tourism website that connect them to a more international community rather than the Balkans.

The uniqueness of Romania's website (Table 8) is that it is the only website to truly stress a great link with folk culture as one of its greatest representations. Since the 20th century, folklore was used by politicians to create a great history for the region of Transylvania after the region was lost by Hungary that took the region's artistic and political influence with them (Mills, 2004). Mills also found that Romanian politicians homogenized the various forms of rural Romanian folklore into one universal form that represented Romanian culture which thus unified the country and was under the artistic control of the socialist ideology. Billstrom (2008) also argues that the notion of identity for Romania is very tradition and nation bounded and that national identity is based on common symbols that are given meaning through statements and stories about the nation. The website is full of photographs, texts, and some promotional videos that feature villagers in traditional ethnic clothing as the main focus. Likewise, for the several destinations that were promoted, both

regions and counties, a majority of them promoted folk culture, farming culture, and ethnic traditions. Although small, there is also reference to the Romanian language which is evidence of a distinct ethnic origin that can be traced back to the Romans (Baar, 2010). Romania's official tourism website displays a pattern of ethno-symbolic nationalism in accordance to Smith's (1998) paradigm description of "modern nationalism and nations that rediscovers and reinterpret the symbols, myths, memories, values, and traditions of their ethno-histories as they face problems with modernity."

Table 8
National identity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Romania > Why Romania > History and culture: "Romania's history has never been so idyllic and quiet as it is for the scenery. Land inhabited by tenacious, hardworking, dignified and courageous people, was always challenged by waves of invaders who attacked this part of Europe." "The only common element has always been the Romanian language, a Latin language. Romanians are the only people of latin origin from this part of Europe, the only one from the eastern part of the continent keeping a memory of the old Rome. The great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga compared us to "a Latin enclave at the gates of the Orient" or "a roman island in a slav sea". "In 1848 another milestone occurs when all Romanian provinces joined, one by one, forty-eighters movement that engulfed Europe. This are the years when nationalist vein grows, it is talked about the common origin of the inhabitants of the Romanian provinces and the national consciousness is stated." ▪ Romania > Experiences > Attractions > Rural tourism > "From fresh healthy food, natural wines from the original local festivals to experience of staying in households or modest but warm and welcoming pensions, all the details are authentic, heartfelt offered and fully Romanian. Especially rural traditions are visible to visitors, and their values are passed from generation to generation. Our people are distinguished by special warmth and native sense of humor that visitors also will find as a treasure." ▪ Romania > Experiences > Destinations > Alba Country > Cultural tourism: " Like any other county where the ethnic communities have lived together since hundreds of years, Alba presents today an invaluable and extremely vast folk treasure, with elements of Romanian, Hungarian and Saxon identity. Basically, anywhere you travel in the county, in any of the villages, you will find an ethnographic exhibition, arranged by the rulers of the village, with the help of locals, so tourists to know and appreciate their identity." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Albania > About Albania > Famous Albanians: "On the top of the list for sure is the National hero and ruler of Medieval Albania Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, he lead the small Albanian nation and unite the people under an resistance of 25 years against the Ottoman Empire that was the strongest army of that era, for that he deserved a gold place in history and around 150 books, operas, paintings ect was made about his figure from Renaissance times until nowadays. He was one of the greatest generals and strategist of the medieval era."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serbia > About Serbia: "Many lessons on bravery, patriotism and the struggle for freedom can be learned wherever you turn in Serbia, as you pass through its cities and regions." ▪ Serbia > About Serbia: "Today, Serbia is a modern, democratic European country, on the path to membership of the European Union, which a diverse range of visitors – from young backpackers to participants in congresses and fairs – visit every day." ▪ Serbia > About Serbia > Villages: "The natural, spontaneous and never phony hospitality and warmness of the hosts are the key elements of the atmosphere experienced when staying in a Serbian village. A tourist will not be made to feel like an outsider in any village in Serbia; he or she will be accepted by the host like a close relative and dear guest whose every wish is to be fulfilled. Around every corner warmth, smiles, consideration and affection await the tourist, something which is hard to find in other countries." ▪ Serbia > About Serbia > Society > The political system: "The Republic of Serbia is the state of the Serbian people and all its citizens who live in it and is founded on the rule of law and social justice, the principles of civil democracy, human and minority rights and freedoms, and commitment to European principles and values." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ North Macedonia > About > Basic info for Macedonia: "As a state, the Republic of Macedonia has been a part of and an active entity on the contemporary international political arena on both bilateral and multilateral level since it gained independence from the Yugoslav Federation. Yet, when it comes to the conditions and data as recorded by history and culture, it may be said that Macedonia is one of the older European civilizations within the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman Empire." ▪ North Macedonia > About > Culture and history: "INEFFACEABLE ARE THE IMPRINTS of the material and spirit culture of inclement historical events in the territory of Macedonia from pre-history, antique, Roman period, Middle and New Century. Nowadays, Republic of Macedonia is rich of material, spiritual and cultural values manifested through numerous cultural and historical monuments, ethnographic elements, ambient wholes, city settlements, museums, galleries, monument-collections, gastronomic and manifestation tourist values." ▪ North Macedonia > About > Things to do > Feel Macedonia through senses > Touch > Culture and history > Museums > Museum of the Macedonian Struggle: "Museum of the Macedonian Struggle is specialized museum with a goal to originally present the historical, cultural and revolutionary traditions of Macedonia and the Macedonian people in their centuries-long struggle for forming their own national state on the Balkans." ▪ North Macedonia > About > Things to do > Feel Macedonia through senses > Sound > Traditional Macedonian clothes: "Always closely linked to their native land, the Macedonian people have mostly lived through centuries of tradition transmitting it from one generation to another, and thus creating an unusually rare material and spiritual culture which bears some patriarchal characteristics." "The national costumes in Macedonia (created over a long period of time), preserved the traces of old cultural influences, and in their way of development fit the elements of old Balkan, Slav and Oriental culture." "All of that is an historic heritage that makes Macedonia proud." "Like its people Macedonia's musical instruments have mixed origins. Many were brought to this land with the various invaders passing through over the centuries, while others are home grown."

Upon the first view of Montenegro's official tourism website, it appears to be simple yet modern and provides all of the necessary features that one would need in a tourism website: 'What to see', 'Top 10 Montenegro', 'Cities and Regions', 'History and Tradition', 'Culture and Art'. As a former member of Yugoslavia and the State of Serbia and Montenegro with new independence in 2006 as its own nation, one might expect to see nationalistic features on Montenegro's official tourism website. However, the website does not go into depth, nationalistically, in terms of history, country biography, religious or historical sites, or other. Surprisingly, their break away from Serbia and the reinventing of their identity as Montenegrin via flag, religion, language, and alphabet were not so apparent aside from the display of the flag on their 'History and traditions' page. Jenne and Bieber (2014) argue that not just presently but for the past six decades that Montenegro practices situational nationalism where their national identities change in response to geopolitical battles that appeal to the loyalties of individuals on a local, national and international level. The lack of nationalism on the website may be due to the lack of a particular type of nationalism in the country due to, according to Jenne and Bieber (2014), the decline in Montenegrin identity and the rise of post war identities with the emergence of Muslim identity, the rise and fall of Yugoslav identity, and Serbian identity in the border regions. And as Ardolic (2008) points out, no noteworthy fervent historic references were part of Montenegrins cry for independence nor claims of Montenegro as the cradle of any nationhood were made on either side. The Montenegrin identity fluctuation is also echoed by a survey on Montenegrin identity by Dzankic (2014) that found not all those who considered themselves Montenegrin in 1991 reported doing so in 2011, which indicates that the ascription to identity categories is in flux. It could be that the official tourism website expresses a form of modern nationalism albeit peaceful and a bit passive when it comes to the subject in accordance with Smith's (1998, p. 22) description of "a product of wholly modern and recent conditions." It could also be argued that their relationship and close ties to Serbia have allowed them to have this independent break away as opposed to Kosovo who rebels. However, it may just be the case that Montenegro's tourism industry, much of it being luxury tourism, accounts for 20% of the country's annual GDP and brings three times as many visitors as the country's total population (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2018), and perhaps remaining neutral is in their best interest.

While Albania's national hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeg is not from antiquity, he is representative of Albania's resistance to Ottoman domination in order to defend Europe which in turn promotes an image of their historic right to be placed in Europe (Nixon, 2010). As seen with other countries in the Balkans, myths and stories about the past have been used to form current identities that downplay more recent troubled pasts (see Table 8). Smith (1998) agrees and states that historical precedents may be useful for nationalist rhetoric and reformers that want to push through painful new measures to strengthen a nation. Nixon (2010) also interestingly claims that in each national story in the Balkans there is a mythic-historical hero who led resistance against the Ottomans, and these representatives not only represent resistance but also a longevity of national spirit of liberty and aspiration for independence all while also defending Europe and Christendom. This desire to showcase Skënderbeg as their national hero which ties them to Europeaness may be perennial as it links this myth not to a grand history but to their continuity as a European state through their heritage.

Amongst the Balkan countries, one of the most controversial is that of Serbia. The website (see Table 8) offers an array of activities and information, although it does stray away from discussion about the war and less desirable historical themes in order to repair the general image of the country that has often been demonized and held responsible for ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and extreme nationalism (Kolsto, 2017). Although Serbia has worked hard at building up its tourism product, its official tourism website tends to be overly boastful yet difficult to categorize. However, based on Smith's (1998) paradigms for nationalism it could be said that the website expresses both perennial ("belonging to a nation means possessing certain qualities") and modernism ("possessing certain resources and capacity for doing").

Until the mid-20th century, the Macedonian identity was very weak and was usually tied into either Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian, or local identities depending on the changing relations with their neighbors' governments (Jenne & Bieber, 2014). As a matter of fact, Bulgaria does not recognize Macedonian language, national identity and key historical figures and consider them as Bulgarian; Greece opposes Macedonia's references to Alexander the Great and his kingdom, while at the beginning of the 20th century Serbian politicians were referring to Macedonia as South Serbia. Therefore, the Republic of North Macedonia's official tourism website is an opportunity for them to display themselves and their history to the world that is not done in a political setting (see Table 8). The website has the most extensive amount of literature for their tourism attractions, which are largely villages and cities that reads more like a history book than it does a destination marketing website. There is little mention of their days with Yugoslavia, but there is a more welcoming tone when they mention the Ottoman empire which is different from the majority of the websites. But what really stands out on this website is the large amounts of historical information. The controversy around the historical information comes from the claims that North Macedonia is creating their own history that is taken from their neighboring countries. This begins during the country's Yugoslav days when it was in need of a great history like its neighboring countries. Yet there was not much to work with as Bulgaria had already identified much of North Macedonia's history, language, and people with their own, the country's Orthodox church was part of Serbia, and meanwhile the country shared a name with a neighboring Greek region.

But the most significant post-Yugoslav attempt made by historians was the incorporation of Greece's Macedonia region into the history of the Republic of North Macedonia that claims that they were not necessarily Greeks but a non-Hellenic biological ethnogenesis of Slavs and Macedonians (Brunnbauer, 2004). Rossos (2008) argues that the problem today is that Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbian politicians and Orthodox church are denying the Macedonians of an identity, nation, and minorities and thus are still contributing to the problem in the Balkans. Hence, the issues surrounding the Republic of North Macedonia as a nation will most probably continue into the future and there may always be issues surrounding their identity, as well as within the tourism industry. The purpose of this paper is not to dispute the historical facts of each nation, but the nationalist tendencies displayed on North Macedonia's official tourism website can be seen as perennial where "the nation is a politicised ethno-cultural community of common ancestry that stakes a claim to a political community with a history that stretches back centuries and embedded in a historic homeland" (Smith, 1998, p. 22).

4.7. Religion

Religion is not only a factor in the identification of particular groups but it is also attractive for tourism culturally, historically, and spiritually. Although religious tensions have decreased amongst Judeo-Christian sects in the West, religion in the Balkans is still tied to territorial and ethnic identity today. While religious tourism is a major industry, some of the official tourism websites take the opportunity to explain their country's religious makeup often with bold lettering to add emphasis on the various faiths, or as a link to the country's rich culture and lengthy history (see Table 9). The official tourism websites for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia express a type of modernist nationalism where religious social groups are divided based on their own interests and needs (Smith, 1998). The websites for Bulgaria and Greece seem to express religion in a perennial sense with a single will and character (Smith, 1998). And it can be said that Serbia's website expresses both of these.

Table 9
Religion

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- **Albania > General information: "There are four official religious beliefs in Albania.** These belong to the Sunni Muslim, Orthodox Christian, Catholic Christian and Bektashi Muslim. Followers of Islam are found throughout the country. Catholics are concentrated mostly in the northern part of the country, the Orthodox in the south and center of the country, and the Bektashi sect of Sufism is found in some specific regions such as Skrapar, Krujë, Elbasan, Mat, Mallakastër, Korçë, etc."
-

Table 9 (continued)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Bosnia and Herzegovina > The heat-shaped land > People: "...there are three main 'peoples' that inhabit this country: Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. There is also a sentiment of just being Bosnian, with no particular affiliation except to the country from where they are from. The Bosniaks are mainly Muslims, the Croats Catholic and the Serbs Orthodox. Despite different religious and/or ethnic background their language, traditions and culture are more similar than not." "In short, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina are southern Slavs, with varying religious backgrounds."▪ Bosnia and Herzegovina > Sarajevo Reigion > Sarajevo the City: "Indeed, few places on earth feature an Orthodox and a Catholic Church, a Mosque and a Synagogue within easy walking distance of each other."▪ Bulgaria > Lifestyle and culture "The traditions, festivals, customs, and rituals preserved by Bulgarians through the ages are evidence of the country's profound spirituality and its dynamic lifestyle and culture." "Bulgarian customs are rooted in antiquity and are closely tied to the country's history and particular expression of Eastern Orthodox Christianity." "The holidays that are most honored by Bulgarians are undoubtedly Christmas and Easter – when the generations all celebrate together, united by the feeling of belonging to the harmonious Bulgarian family."	<hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Greece > Where to go > Religion: "From the earliest times it has been a custom of the Greek people to express their religious sentiments, their deep faith and their reverence for God, a key characteristic of the Orthodox faith for 2000 years." "Whether you come on a pilgrimage or to discover places and monuments that bring us closer to the divine aspect of our existence, come and visit these special places in Greece, where Man once raised his eyes up to search for the Divine Light. And then discovered it within his own soul!"▪ Greece > Where to go > Religion > Religious sites: "From the years of the Byzantine Empire (330-1453 A.D.), Greek land has been indissolubly linked to the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church, which played a significant role during the Turkish Occupation Period in maintaining the language and identity of the Greeks, while the clergy played an active role during the Greek War of Independence (1821-1830) in throwing off Ottoman yoke and creating the New Hellenic State. Orthodox Churches and Monasteries were always important convocations of social cohesion and references."
<hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ North Macedonia > About > Culture and history: "It is normal to see both churches and monasteries in many cities. The major part of the population belongs to the Orthodox Christian religion (65%). According to the representation, the citizens of Islam religion are at the second place (33%). The others are Catholics, Protestants, Atheists and members of other religions. Churches and monasteries In the Macedonia country, where Paul the Apostle, the Saint Cyril and Methodius and their followers spread the Christianity, numerous churches and monasteries are constructed built in different period."	<hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Serbia > About Serbia > Society > Population: "The majority of the population of Serbia is of the Christian Orthodox faith. The Serbian Orthodox Church, autocephalous since 1219, has played an important role in the development and preservation of the Serbian national identity."▪ Serbia > About Serbia > Society > Population: "The traditional churches and religious communities which have had centuries-long historical continuity in Serbia and whose legal subjectivity is acquired pursuant to special laws are: the Serbian Orthodox Church: the Roman Catholic Church, the Slovakian Evangelical Church, the Reformed Christian Church, the Evangelical Christian Church, the Islamic Religious Community, the Jewish Religious Community."

4.8. East and West

Although it is also common to see the narrative of 'East and West' in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans stresses its peripheral position due to its historical crossroads amongst groups of people with various ethnic backgrounds, religions, and cultures and this idea remains that basis for interpretation of cultural heritage and identity today (Šešić & Mijatović, 2014). To explain this, Furumizo (2005) states that the "other" is a key concept in cross-cultural communication when examining the ideas of the "self" and that this "self" is formed when looking at the cultural and social relationship with the "other" which therein divides the world into regions with distinctive cultural characteristics with the main point that we are superior to others. The author goes on to say that the Western study of the East, or Orient, was bound up in systematic prejudices about the non-Western world (Furumizo (2005). Often you can see beaches represented in coastal countries and natural attractions in mainland countries with no other bias other than boasting of their beauty, but cultural heritage all over the region is often referred to as "crossroads between East and West" (Naef & Ploner, 2016). Some countries speak of their East and West straddling in historical, religious, and territorial terms (Table 10). This can be argued to be a form of nationalism that most likely comes from the fall of the Ottoman Empire when countries were striving for independence and balancing the formation of new national identities based on ethno-symbolism while also explaining their Ottoman past. From this standpoint, it could be that some of the tourism websites mention this in an effort to be seen as the point where they are the boundary where both of these cultures meet but are still European, or "west" and not more oriental. Likewise, it can be argued that each country is claiming to be where Eastern European society mixes with

Western European society and may have nothing to do with the Orient. In this sense, it could be said that the following countries express perennial nationalistic tendencies as "a nation 'rooted' in place and time and is a historic homeland" (Smith, 1998).

Table 10
East and West

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina > Sarajevo Region > "The cultural, natural, and historical heritage** is certainly amongst the most fascinating in all of the Balkans – for it is here that the great eastern and western powers met and left their influences in this largely unknown corner of the world."
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina > Sarajevo Region > Sarajevo City:** "If there were any city in Europe that effortlessly straddles east and west, it is Sarajevo. Here the **Byzantine and Ottoman empires of the east and the Roman, Venetian and Austro-Hungarian empires of the west** left an indelible mark through culture, traditions and religions. A walk through Sarajevo is a walk through its past. From the oriental Ottoman quarters lined with sweet shops, café's and handicraft workshops, to the administrative and cultural centre of Austro-Hungarian times, **Sarajevo encompasses the very best of both worlds.**"

- **Bulgaria > Lifestyle and culture:** "The country is located at the crossroad between Europe and Asia, and the lands of Bulgaria have been populated since antiquity."

- **Montenegro > History and tradition >**"A state with a long tradition, the meeting point of different cultural and religious influences on the border of Orthodox East and Catholic West, today's Montenegro is a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic environment functioning in perfect harmony."

- **North Macedonia > About > Basic info for Macedonia:** "The Republic of Macedonia is located in Southeast Europe, in the central part of the Balkan Peninsula and has a position of strategic crossroads and a bridge between Europe and the nearby countries of Asia and North Africa."
- **North Macedonia > About > Culture and History:** "The east and west civilization intercede in Macedonia."

- **Romania > Experiences > Destinations > Constanta county:** "Constanta is a sparkling city that combines millennial history with modernism. It is a city that celebrates multi-culturalism, a city where eastern civilization meets and blends with the West to generate a spectacular and lively spirit."

- **Serbia > Destinations > Cities and municipalities > Belgrade:** "It is one of the oldest cities in Europe and has since ancient times been an important crossing of the ways where the roads of eastern and western Europe meet. The city lies on two international waterways, **at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers**, which surround it on three sides. Because of this position, Belgrade is fittingly referred to as the Gateway to the Balkans and the Door to Central Europe."
- **Serbia > About Serbia > Facts > Geographic location:** "Serbia stands at the crossroads of **Eastern and Western Europe**, its routes leading via the Morava-Vardar and Nišava-Marica valleys to the Aegean coast, to Asia Minor and to the Middle East."
- **Serbia > About Serbia:** "Serbia has connected West with East for centuries – a land in which **civilisations, cultures, faiths, climates and landscapes** meet and mingle." "Serbia is a **crossroads of Europe** and a geopolitically important territory."
- **Serbia > About Serbia > Society:** "Serbia has always straddled East and West, not only in a geographical sense, but also politically and culturally. At first, Serbia found itself between the Byzantine and Roman empires, then it became a frontier between the Ottoman Empire and the Christian West. This centuries-long position in the path of conquering armies from both sides has led to constant migrations and the mixing of populations. The result is a multiethnic, multicultural and multiconfessional society in Serbia." "And even during communism the inhabitants of this region were somewhere between the Warsaw Pact and NATO."
- **Serbia > Culture:** "Although Serbia has for centuries been the scene of frequent wars, devastation, fires and mass-migrations, on the turbulent roads leading from East to Europe and from Europe to East, a rich cultural and historical legacy has remained there. The rich variety of historical monuments and sites of natural beauty make Serbia a country of great interest for tourism and very much part of its attraction."

- **Turkey > Things to do and see > Attractions and culture > Historical places > Turkey's monumental buildings:** "Turkey, such an exotic country, the meeting point of various civilizations, has always been a vital link between East and West. This of course created a country with breathtaking historical monuments and ruins." "Turkey, such an exotic country, the meeting point of various civilizations, has always been a vital link between East and West."

5. Conclusion

This paper aimed to analyze how nationalism manifests itself within official tourism websites in the Balkans and the findings show that there are some nationalistic tendencies in line with Smith's six institutional cultural dimensions of nations and nationalism and other definitions found in his work. Some countries like Slovenia, Montenegro, and Croatia try to be the least detailed as possible in terms of their history and instead focus on their most popular tourism products. This does not mean that nationalism does not exist on their

official tourism websites but at least in a commercial sense it was difficult to find any exaggerated claims of superiority on them. In the case of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Romania, they all highlight the difficulties of the socialist period, noting the importance of moving forward following what is considered a dark time. Albania uses the reiteration of this time period as an interruption to their continuity, but at least makes efforts in its incorporation to their tourism product which is not done in most other Balkan nations. Bosnia and Herzegovina was the only former Yugoslav country to be so vocal about the former state but also focused a great deal on the war as part of their country's identity on their official tourism website. And, Romania although only briefly mentioning communism and other aspects of their culture and history, focused heavily on folklore and rural culture as one of the main representations of their tourism identity. In the case of Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria the official tourism websites managed to cover many of Smith's six institutional and cultural dimensions for nationalism with an overwhelming disdain for Ottomans that are often labeled Turks, religious and historical continuity and its affiliation to national identity, disputes over land and its historical importance, and antiquity. Serbia's website has shown examples comparing their national identity as superior to their neighbors and their religious and ethnic claims over Kosovo. Bulgaria strives to demonstrate their continuity with antiquity that paints a picture that Bulgaria is still connected to the people of the Thracian identity. Greece arguably has the strongest tourism brand within the region, however, nationalistic tendencies in regards to religion, ethnicity, history, language, and territory were all evident on their official tourism website. Originally it was supposed that Turkey's website would be a bit more nationalistic but it was not as overwhelming, even though they display forms of nationalism towards history, territory, modern day Turkish national festivals, religion, and a theme of being the "cradle of civilization." North Macedonia's website was also problematic as it showed off a tourism product that seemed more like a biography or proof of their lengthy heritage which is widely contested by historians from the region and seemed inappropriate for a tourism website.

It can be argued that nationalism is present amongst all of the websites, albeit minimally depending on the source, but when presented it is usually descriptive of perennialism, ethno-symbolism, and modernism that promotes a continuity of antiquity, ethnicity, and religious identification in relation to a modern nationalistic identity with, at times, an avoidance of past atrocities. The minimal nationalism on the tourism websites may also be attributed to the strive for EU membership or that they have a great destination marketing team that knows how to showcase their product. In conclusion, the whole point of having an official tourism website is to showcase the various activities in a country that may be appealing to tourists. Some of these websites did this very well, however many of the websites seem to use the opportunity to focus just on who they are historically and focused less on what they offer tourists. Ortakovski (2013) puts it beautifully with "Nationalism needs to be reduced to a minimum, while competitive patriotism needs to be encouraged in order to create harmonious living among ethnic groups. It is crucial to eliminate conflict and violence in the Balkans, as it has no place in a unified and prosperous Europe." This same competitive patriotism can also be applied to their tourism industry as it allows for the display of national identity and differentiation amongst nations that share the common label of being Balkan.

Tourism activities may lead to the reignition of differences and hatred, or maybe it might recall a common identity and love (Causevic & Lynch, 2011). As tourism grows as a profitable industry in the Balkans, the delicacy of the region is in dire need of not only infrastructure, qualified workers, and a solid product but also amicable policies. As Kavoura (2014) has argued, place identity, which is associated with national identity, may lead to the branding of a region, place, or country and therefore strategic policies in regards to planning, marketing, and advertising are required in order to promote the distinct characteristics of the destination. The current state of the official tourism websites can be summed up by Viejo-Rose (2013, p. 129) in that there is a "reconceptualized vision of the country, its past and its people are supported by an à la carte selection from the past; some historical moments are glorified while others disappear from the public sphere." This à la carte

selection could be due to several factors such as nationalism, embarrassment, current politics, but also for the possibility for EU membership. However, Bardo (2013) theorizes that much of the Balkans suffers from an ethno-confessional nationalism that is collective, chronic, and non-economic. The dangers of nationalism being non-economic for the tourism industry in the Balkans is that some nations are willing to sacrifice economic goals for national ones, and will do so collectively and habitually. Bardos (2013) concludes that the most that can be done is to avoid policies that exacerbate ethno-confessional nationalistic tendencies that are consistent with realistic understandings of the phenomenon. Yet, the author remains skeptical that this type of tension in the Balkans will subside in the near future. Not only is nationalism potentially damaging for individual countries, but for the entire region as a whole. As Smith et al. (2018) found in their research on tourism image in the Balkans on user-generated content websites like TripAdvisor, that opinions about tourist related services that use the word 'Balkans' in their reviews can shape the region's tourism-related image regardless of which country they are in. With this in mind and the rapid rate that global tourism is growing, it seems that the industry will not wait for the social and political tensions in the Balkans to resolve themselves.

One of the most interesting things one gathers from the investigation of websites is that while the English-language versions of national tourism organization websites intend to communicate to an international audience and entice tourists to come to visit their countries, the ways that they communicate to an international audience is laced with national biases, identity politics, and animosities towards others. So while the national tourism organization would think that they are communicating to foreign audiences and enticing visitors, they also portray their own national biases and are to a large extent captured by their own sense of nationalism and national identity. While such biases may seem somewhat perplexing to a potential visitor, they reflect the ideology and nationalism of those who are marketing their country's tourism product. These biases may also unintentionally undermine a potential incoming visitor's likelihood to travel to a destination. For example, it may well be that a visitor to an English-speaking website from the Balkans may not really share the content creators' anti-Turkish sentiment or may wonder why there seem to be no "Greek" ruins in a part of the world in which the Greeks were so prominent. As such, the nationalism and national biases of the content creators may undermine their own marketing by misunderstanding the international tourist market.

Future research on the topic should look at how nationalism differs between the native language of the country and the English-language version of its official tourism website. It would be interesting to know if the text is directly translated or if a different message is conveyed in the English-language version. In addition, it may be better to also compare vastly different countries in which nationalism developed in very different ways. For example, some countries that are federations may market their tourism products differently, as their sense of nationalism is somewhat undermined by regionalism that is institutionalized by component states and identities.

All-in-all, this research has given us a great deal of insight into how the Balkan states want to represent themselves to source markets for tourists. It shows how they represent their history and identity, sometimes being careful not to offend but sometime, apparently, not caring if they do offend. As such, the research indicates some weaknesses with regards to how national tourism organizations market themselves, sometimes lacking a sense of self-awareness and assuming that the foreign market is sympathetic to them and has the same sense of national pride. The lack of self-awareness may be generally considered a weakness, undermining the effectiveness of the message and possibly alienating potential tourism and tourism spending.

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