



# Cultural Tourism and Community Engagement: Insight from Montenegro

*Ilija Moric, Sanja Pekovic, Jovana Janinovic*

*University of Montenegro, Montenegro*

**Đurđica Perovic**

*University of Montenegro, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Montenegro*

**Michaela Griesbeck**

*University of Vienna, Austria*

## Abstract

**Background:** Cultural tourism in Montenegro is growing, mostly due to the integral growth and development of tourism products. However, an in-depth insight into the relationship between cultural tourism and community engagement is missing.

**Objectives:** The paper aims to examine the relationship between cultural tourism development and community engagement in Montenegro. **Methods/Approach:**

Using the extensive literature, available secondary data, and an analysis of relevant policies, the paper explores new possibilities for diversifying tourism offer at heritage sites, by engaging volunteers, enhancing understanding of the socio-historical background, promoting the usage of digital tools, partnering with relevant stakeholders, introducing innovative funding tools and schemes. **Results:** Several management issues associated with heritage tourism and community participation are acknowledged. **Conclusions:** Key findings indicate the need for a systemic, dynamic, and innovative framework for sustainable and highly impactful heritage tourism in Montenegro, which policymakers, heritage ventures, and other stakeholders might use to strengthen community engagement and development at the heritage sites.

**Keywords:** cultural tourism, heritage, community engagement, Montenegro

**JEL classification:** M21

**Paper type:** Research article

**Received:** Mar 28, 2020

**Accepted:** Jun 08, 2020

**Citation:** Moric, I., Pekovic, S., Vukčević, J., Perović, Đ., Grisbeck, M. (2021), "Cultural Tourism and Community Engagement: Insight from Montenegro", Business Systems Research, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 164-178.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.2478/bsrj-2021-0011>

## Introduction

According to UNWTO, cultural tourism attracts visitors, which are motivated to learn, discover, experience, and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination (UNWTO, 2019). Interestingly, key features of cultural tourism are quite diverse, including tangible heritage (art, architecture, historical, cultural, etc.) and intangible components (e.g., music, lifestyles, value systems, beliefs, traditions, etc.). Worldwide, cultural tourism covers at least 20% of arrivals in towns in the sense that culture is the main attraction to visit, learn, discover, and experience (MSDT, 2019). This percentage is even higher if leisure tourists are taken into account due to their interest in the local culture, especially food, music, events. Additionally, cultural tourists are well known for being more respectful towards cultural and natural resources, with higher education and higher expenditure (Hughes, 1987).

On the other side, the local community is playing important role in the general economic and social development of a certain geographical area. Several authors (Cooper et al., 2005) stress the significance of community engagement in sustainable tourism development, in economic (e.g., generation of income), socio-cultural (e.g., provision of employment and reduction of poverty), environmental (e.g., nature protection) and sense of tourist satisfaction (e.g. added value to total experience). Therefore, successful sustainable tourism development has to respond to the expectations, needs of hosts, and guests alike (UNWTO, 2018). Consequently, the valorization of cultural resources cannot be planned and managed without a host community and its active engagement.

From a visitor's point of view, authentic cultural contact and experience need the presence of local and professional intermediaries and interpreters (Salazar, 2012). However, in reality, this role is not always played efficiently due to several reasons. Chirikure et al. (2010) show that participatory management in the heritage industry could have various effects, pointing out that success depends on the local situation, type of cultural heritage, the general context of development, etc. Crooke (2010) emphasizes the importance of different determinants such as motivations, issues of authority, and the value of community-heritage engagement in the function of management and development of cultural tourism. These findings are important to understand the complexity of the community participation process in the context of tourist experience delivery. Due to this, community engagement represents a critical factor for the sustainable development of cultural tourism and their link is necessary to explore and explain. In addition, attention has to be focused on the importance of innovation and technology that can improve governance, profits, and the wellbeing of residents as well as empower local populations and communities, especially in terms of retaining their authenticity (UNWTO, 2018). Key benefits could be obtained in terms of better preservation of intangible and tangible heritage resources and consequently higher quality of the tourist experience. Apart from technology and innovation, new trends in visitor management have to be examined to amplify cultural tourism's attractiveness while managing appropriately numerous visitors (UNWTO/UNESCO, 2018). This could engender various benefits to visitors and host communities while preserving cultural values.

Inevitably, cultural tourism strategies must consider the interests and expectations of the local community (UNWTO/UNESCO, 2018). In other words, community engagement is often seen as a means of implementing sustainable tourism (Okazaki, 2008). According to conclusions of the UNESCO Convention on the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, it is quite important to foster roles of local cultural communities, especially their participation in safeguarding, where this term refers to different activities that include identification, research, preservation, promotion,

enhancement and the revitalization of the various aspects of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003). In a practical sense, this could be achieved via different frameworks and mechanisms. UNWTO and UNESCO (2018) promote the necessity for a stronger role of the local community in heritage conservation and safeguarding in a way that tourism revenue has to be redirected towards these two challenges. But direct financial support is often not enough. So, merging creativity and technological innovation among the host community, as well as protecting heritage, are also seen as essential for promoting responsible and sustainable tourism (UNWTO/UNESCO, 2018). All these recommended issues related to community engagement have to be carefully examined and included in the new, dynamic, flexible, and systemic framework that can empower the local community, culture, and tourism development.

Several authors examine processes and activities in tourism from the system approach. Perovic et al. (2018) investigate the influence of tangible and intangible dimensions of tourism offer on tourist intention to return to Montenegro and the tourist overall satisfaction using a systemic approach. Moric (2013b) proposes a systemic cluster approach in developing rural tourism. A similar systems approach to tourism as an example of a complex system could be found in other reteaches (Lazanski et al., 2006; Gmür et al., 2010). In addition, Pejic-Bach et al. (2014) suggest the usage of a system approach in the area of tourism organization management with a focus on socially responsible behavior. There is a need for a new framework that turns tourism and host community into a tool to protect tangible and intangible cultural heritage (UNWTO/UNESCO, 2018). This refers to systemic and innovative solutions that could help to overpass existing challenges in different aspects of cultural tourism development. For example, communities and cultural heritage in rural areas could face different obstacles for their additional sustainable initiatives competing to those in urban destinations, mostly due to contemporary global environment of competition and changing consumer behavior on one side and specific ecosystem present in the rural less developed area (Moric, 2013a). In addition, similar problems of community non-engagement are unfortunately often present in transition economies and appropriate stimulation by government bodies and other stakeholders (e.g., foreign development agencies) is necessary, as well as new and encouraging legal and strategic frameworks. This necessity is recognized in the Cultural tourism development program of Montenegro (MSDT, 2019) where the support of the local community together with experts in cultural and tourism sectors represent two key factors of success. Anyway, Montenegrin experiences in the area of community-based tourism are not examined.

Therefore, this paper aims to provide an insight from Montenegro that will contribute to a better understanding of the necessity for more systemic frameworks and mechanisms for sustainable development of cultural tourism, as well as provide a platform for future research and strategic consideration. Existing literature on community-based tourism is extensive, but the experiences are quite different due to the great number of social, political, economic, and other factors that determine the success of community engagement. Hence, this study enriches previous research in two important ways. First, findings will include the influence of the transitional character of the economy on community participation. Second, this paper contributes to human resource education and training by examining the guidelines for more professional and innovative development among the locals.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature related to the conceptual basics of tourism, culture, community, and their interrelation. Section 3 presents the data and methodology. Results and discussion

are provided in section 4, while conclusions and suggestions for future development are given in section 5.

## Literature Review

### *Community role*

There is a vast number of studies related to the conceptual basics of community role, engagement, and importance for tourism development (Salazar, 2012; Goodwin and Santilli, 2009; MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003). Its complexity is widely recognized, but still not entirely examined, mostly due to various groups of factors that could generate a more dynamic and competitive ambient for locals and their behavior. Goodwin and Santilli (2009) examine the success factors of tourism initiatives in the context of community-based tourism and point out following ten key determinants: social capital and empowerment, environment conservation, improved standard of living, local economic development and commercial viability, education, sense of place, tourism (e.g., new tourist experiences), collective benefits (e.g., infrastructure) and other (e.g. funding). For example, it is interesting that social capital and empowerment (e.g., local community management or ownership) are ranked as primary, and collective benefits (e.g., infrastructure, social services) are behind commercial viability and environment conservation.

Despite the mentioned complexity of motives related to community involvement, local-level participation is seen as the key factor of successful sustainable development, but it is not always practical, desired, and possible (Salazar, 2012). For example, total involvement and control of the local community over cultural resources should not be always understood as a sustainable and responsible development mechanism, mostly due to possibilities of misuse, degradation, and/or over-tourism. On the other side, it is understandable that non-material cultural tourism requires higher involvement of local populations to present local specifics, way of life, activities, and traditions than more material or tangible forms (e.g., museums) of experience (Briassoulis, 2002). Consequently, community engagement challenges and opportunities are different in various segments of cultural tourism such as religious, educational, festival, folklore, heritage, and non-material cultural tourism.

Also, theory tends to treat the local community as a homogenous social unit, but in practice, it is rarely seen (Blackstock, 2005). In reality, there are several groups in the community with often opposite approaches and ideas about heritage tourism development, especially in sense of the following issues: modes of commercialization, cultural integrity, and identity, sustainability, etc. For example, the process of destination image formation may conflict with residents' concepts of self-identity (Hughes and Allen, 2005). Indeed, this is the case when certain heritage aspects are more emphasized compared to others, to create an image that will have better commercial effects and attract more tourists. Also, there has been expressed much concern about locally distinctive products becoming indistinct due to the lack of possibilities to protect them from invasive global systems of value (Richards and Wilson, 2006). In such circumstances, the local community tends to oppose and protect its identity, even via provoking conflicts with tourists.

### *Local community active involvement*

Despite the mentioned strategic and technical challenges, the local community has to take (pro)active in the provision of cultural experiences rather than being just passive elements in indistinctive products (Richards and Wilson, 2006). This opportunity could be obtained by creating a flexible framework that will allow different stakeholders to be cooperative and creative. In line with mentioned, the most efficient

mechanism for local community involvement lies in the hand of representatives of local authorities (MSDT, 2019). Namely, their role is to technically and financially support and stimulate local initiatives, so they are usually quite informed about the needs and ideas of locals. On the other side, they could provide necessary support from government bodies and foreign organizations (e.g., development agencies). However, similar influence could have tourism and hotel industry (e.g., resorts, tour operators) in destination, mostly due to its financial potentials and promotional effects that could be induced on the wider market.

### *Local community and authenticity*

To understand the size and structure of this issue, especially negative and disturbing consequences on tourist satisfaction, Cetin and Bilgihan (2016) point out the lack of authenticity in cultural tourist destinations where there is a decreasing number of locals living in the area, followed by expansion of hospitality and shopping facilities for tourists (e.g., cafes, souvenir shops). In this way, cultural resources become front stages for commercial purposes, while their authentic meaning is adapted to simple tourist demand. On the other side, there are several immaterial resources such as norms, habits, behavior, "smell-scape", "soundscape" and the place's genius loci or feeling of the place, that could be consumed by tourists (Briassoulis, 2002). Most of these elements are created and maintained by the local community. Consequently, they could be modified or controlled only if the flexible and inclusive framework is obtained, which naturally has to include locals. It offers new market possibilities for managers and policymakers in the sense of branding, mostly because these intangible cultural attributes are authentic, strategically quite effective for long-term differentiation, and almost impossible to imitate by competition. Not surprisingly, this approach reduces the costs of experienced production but requires vast investments in the social and creative capital of local people (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Moreover, research shows that kindness and politeness of local people, communication, politeness with children, and other similar intangible elements, have a stronger impact on tourist satisfaction than tangible ones (Perovic et al., 2018). Also, intangible components generated mostly by the local community could be communicated via storytelling, advice, and recommendations related to sightseeing, gratis services (e.g., transport, animation, gastronomy). Due to this challenge, locals are important for the generation of social interaction during the visit where intangible elements of this experience include local hospitality, politeness, friendliness, etc. (Cetin and Bilgihan, 2016).

Such a strategic and innovative approach that includes locals and their spontaneous and authentic positive attitude and behavior should be systemically supported to provide a higher quality of tourist cultural experience. Although most of these processes are out of direct managerial control, policymakers have to generate a wider, integrative and destination-level approach. This opens two key issues. First, this shows the importance of planning general creative human resource development programs in a destination. Second, activities such as continuous awareness programs, informative and interactive workshops, and educational campaigns represent the strategic means for more effective and efficient local engagement into development processes, as well as higher community satisfaction.

### *Local community and education*

Professional education and training are pointed out as important tools to improve hospitality and general communication competencies (MSDT, 2019). Otherwise, insufficient and/or wrong education and training could provoke barriers in the provision of authentic cultural experience as well as social-cultural exchange. In this way, successful local professionals in cultural tourism represent efficient intermediaries

among the rest of the community, especially in the context of cultural habits, respect, and confidence expansion. For example, the role of local, professional, and well-trained tour guides is widely recognized as important due to their communication effect and 'insider' impact on tourists (Salazar, 2012). On the other side, these skilled and educated individuals are an important link between the local community and the cultural/tourism industry.

### *Local community and networking*

Clusters and networks are recognized as important tools for local community involvement in the area of cultural tourism development because they could help development, preservation, and promotion, especially in isolated areas where there is a lack of other cooperative opportunities (MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003). Also, to promote the profitability of tourism among local rural community, Moric (2013b) proposes clustering micro and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that stimulates the flow of financial resources within local economies and communities, preventing economic leakage within the destination. In this way, local entrepreneurs could help long-term economic sustainability on one side, and more diversified and developed products and services on the other. Also, their ability to generate employment and income has to be supported by continuous education opportunities, available consulting services, and a flexible business ecosystem. It could be concluded that profitability and training opportunities could retain local professionals and provide possibilities for their further improvement and specialization. This opens opportunities for the rest of the locals to participate and support local development.

## **Methodology**

Using the significant literature resources, existing secondary data from Montenegrin government bodies, NGOs, and foreign development agencies (e.g., Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism), and relevant international organizations (UNWTO, UNESCO), the research is focused on community engagement in cultural tourism as an important and critical factor of success. Using these secondary data, combined with data obtained by fieldwork conducted during 2019 at heritage sites in Montenegro (e.g., Kotor, Cetinje, and Podgorica), the paper investigates the key challenges (e.g., status quo, business opportunities, future perspectives, etc.) associated with the role of locals in development processes. Based on qualitative analysis, these elements are examined to suggest guidelines for future development. Moreover, the paper explores new possibilities for diversifying tourism offer at heritage sites in Montenegro, by engaging volunteers, enhancing understanding of the socio-historical background, promoting the usage of digital tools, partnering with relevant stakeholders, introducing innovative funding tools and schemes.

## **Results**

According to the Cultural Tourism Development Programme of Montenegro with Action Plan 2019 – 2021, as a key national strategic document for cultural tourism development, followed by other strategies and plans (e.g., Montenegro tourism development strategy to 2020, National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Montenegro by 2030), an insight of important issues related to local community engagement is created and commented. Also, data from fieldwork at heritage sites in Montenegro are added to gain more in-depth results. Such general results are further carefully analyzed in the context of community involvement seen from strategic as well as technical and operational levels. According to mentioned secondary data sources and methodological approach, several key features could be pointed out.

### *General tourism context*

Initial findings obtained during field research are linked to general conditions present in Montenegrin typical transitional economy. Most of these issues are linked with financial challenges and lack of funding when culture is in question. Apart from the financial aspect, there is an evident challenge in the context of general tourism sustainability. For example, as the most of tourist overnights in Montenegro are generated in the south region (over 90%), more balanced regional development should be considered. In addition, the focus should be shifted to the development of alternative forms of tourism that could generate more visits in central and northern parts of the country (Monstat, 2019; Moric, 2013b). In addition, there is a wide number of other issues generated by mass tourism, which could create an obstacle for alternative cultural tourism development (e.g., limited funding for cultural initiatives, over-tourism, etc.).

### *Cultural tourism context*

Montenegro has a rich base of tangible and intangible cultural resources. But, a significant percentage of locals are not fully familiar with existing cultural heritage, primarily due to a lack of knowledge and awareness about its historical, artistic, socio-cultural, and economic values. This could be identified as a significant obstacle for more (pro)active local community involvement. Otherwise, further cultural degradation is inevitable, especially in terms of the lack of opportunities for the next generations in the area of sustainable cultural tourism development.

Apart from the conventional cultural heritage, abandoned industrial structures in Montenegro represent valuable cultural tourism resources, especially in terms of their spatial capacities (e.g., factories, military bases), where the most important idea is MACCOC - Marina Abramović Community Centre Obod Cetinje (Cetinje Municipality, 2019). New cultural ideas and products could be also linked with other activities and heritage, especially in the area of agriculture (e.g., Katun), intangible heritage (e.g., skills and knowledge), handcraft, etc.

Participation in international culture routes is recognized as an important potential for international visibility, especially since Europe has 33 such cultural routes. However, at the local level, there are no developed schemes or approaches to involve locals. In addition, UNESCO included certain cultural resources (e.g., Kotor) on its list and in that way raised international awareness on the cultural heritage of Montenegro, but the general cultural image is weak in sense of global visibility, manifested as a low level of knowledge amongst tourists about the cultural heritage of Montenegro. This finding requires the need for implementation of a strategic approach in cultural tourism development. In an operational sense, this means the involvement of all stakeholders, especially tourism organizations, government and local authorities, media, etc.

In line with global aspects of development, new marketing opportunities are identified in distant markets and consequently regional cooperation with benefits for local communities in terms of cultural identity promotion, potential profitability, and contact with very different cultures and visitors (e.g., China).

### *Local community context*

Locals could benefit from active involvement in the organization of festivals and other cultural initiatives, mostly from training courses, workshops, preservation and usage of traditional values, access to assets, local production of food and beverage, etc. These business opportunities are partly recognized by locals but require a more systemic and sustainable approach for higher benefits. In addition, cultural tourism in Montenegro

is seen as an important instrument that can contribute to image creation, tourist season extension, cultural heritage protection, and foster sustainable development at the macro/destination level. Unfortunately, these benefits are not clearly understood at the micro and local levels.

According to the general tourism policy in Montenegro, the local community is identified as an important factor and includes the following key stakeholders: non-government organizations, owners of construction buildings, and lessees. In addition, the local community, which is not involved in the process of planning the development of cultural tourism, could create resistance towards different stakeholders. There is a wide recognition that involvement of the local community has to be stimulated via measures such as awareness stimulation on the importance of tourism; entrepreneurship encouragement and enhancement of tourism links with other sectors of the local economy. Unfortunately, the practical application of mentioned statements and programs is not enough and requires further improvement. Interesting weak sides related to local community capacities are: lack of knowledge of foreign languages (e.g., German), insufficient number of cultural/tourism professionals, locally produced food and beverage is insufficiently present in hospitality offer, etc.

On the other side, in sense of (e.g., foreign) expert engagement, a key challenge is the fact that they are not always familiar with local opinions, attitudes, and specificities. In addition, the lack of their specific competencies could shift the attention from crucial to marginal and unimportant issues. The lack of specialized local experts is also clearly a noticeable challenge.

To keep this analysis inside the local community context, the following results are most important for further analysis. First, cultural tourism is developing and still facing a range of barriers, challenges, and issues, which are the consequence of the general business environment in Montenegro (e.g., lack of funding for cultural ideas and initiatives). Second, the dominant focus is on sea & sun tourism, followed by a lack of initiatives in alternative tourism (e.g., cultural). On one side, most entrepreneurial capacities are involved in mass tourism, whereas on the other side, there is an evident lack of entrepreneurial abilities among cultural institutions and professionals. This imbalance requires structural reform. Third, cultural heritage (e.g., museums) is still seen mostly as a complementary product (e.g., excursion or a short visit for mass tourists). In addition, cultural tourism products are old-fashioned often lacking the application of modern digital technology. Moreover, heritage sites of secondary or tertiary significance, due to limited potential to attract a critical number of visitors, are quite often experiencing a certain form of devastation or irresponsible usage, while primary attraction is sometimes "administratively overprotected" resulting in its isolation from commercial purposes and consequent disappearance from tourism market. Finally, there is an evident gap between community and heritage, especially those placed in museums and galleries. This fact is further problematized by the lack of systemically organized schemes or approaches for the local community to take initiatives efficiently and effectively. This complex problem is followed by limited (e.g., public) funding, lack of IT application, and occasionally unclear procedures when valorization of cultural heritage is in question.

## Discussion

Related to previously mentioned key opportunities, barriers, challenges, and specifics linked with the local community and cultural tourism, several management and marketing issues have to be discussed (see Table 1).

Table 1

Key management and marketing issues related to cultural tourism development in Montenegro

<b>Management/marketing issues</b>	<b>Strategic aspects</b>	<b>Operational/technical aspects</b>
<b>New cultural tourism products</b>	<i>Innovative and internationally visible products; Cooperative approach; IT opportunities.</i>	<i>“Live” cultural products; Commercially important products; Thematically conceptualized tours; Combinations with health and MICE offers; Daily excursions; Panoramic routes and viewpoints.</i>
<b>Cooperation and networks</b>	<i>Diversification of products.</i>	<i>Integration into international networks and organizations; Cultural routes.</i>
<b>Sustainable and responsible development</b>	<i>Cultural products harmonized with the economic, environmental, and social context.</i>	<i>Responsible commercialization; Efficient preservation; Opportunities for new ideas; Socio-cultural importance and identity.</i>
<b>Support for the local community</b>	<i>Continual education and training; Raising awareness programs.</i>	<i>Financial and non-financial support (e.g., grants, workshops, training).</i>

Source: Authors

### *New cultural tourism products*

Although Montenegro could provide a vast variety of cultural material and immaterial heritage, there is an obvious lack of precisely and operationally defined and internationally visible, independently organized, and commercially important cultural products. Innovative and professional offerings are key to success. Great potential lays in immaterial cultural heritage, which is not sufficiently valorized mostly due to lack of knowledge, skill, and technological opportunities. Although, it probably represents the most innovative segment of cultural tourism thanks to its ‘live’, rich, creative, and dynamic character. Indeed, ‘live’ and real cultural products are quite necessary because they are based on real-life and individuals as intermediates in the process of cultural exchange and communication. In addition, there is a need for a more cooperative approach between different stakeholders (e.g., private, public sector) to activate primary, secondary and tertiary cultural attractions. In line with this, mixed and combined programs are necessary due to relatively weaker possibilities of Montenegrin heritage to attract enough visitors. These combinations could include the following options: thematically conceptualized tours, combinations with health and MICE, daily excursions, panoramic routes, etc.

It is well known in theory and practice that minor heritage resources could quite often have a major role, especially in sense of cultural identity of local communities (Cuccia and Rizzo, 2011). Hence, local entrepreneurs should be informed, educated, and trained to select and develop those experiences that are more suitable for tourists, but also local social context and tourism industry in Montenegro. This could help to avoid leakage of scarce resources and not to lose focus on crucial and strategic issues and resources.

This leads to another quite common challenge, such as the insufficient number of professionals with necessary interdisciplinary and entrepreneurial skills. This is not the

only problem in Montenegro, but also often seen in other more tourism developed destinations in Europe (Salazar, 2012). This could be overpassed with constant support (e.g., financial, educational, and technical) to different groups of experts and locals interested in the development of real, market-oriented, long-term sustainable tourism businesses. Significant professionals are local tour guides that could have a better effect on the quality of experience as long as their professional involvement is followed by adequate awareness and understanding of the importance of the image-building process. In addition, limited human and financial resources could be overpassed via micro-clusters and networks in Montenegrin rural and cultural tourism. In this vein, community involvement should be considered as a strategic tool in the sustainable planning of cultural tourism development in Montenegro.

### *Cooperation and networks*

Cultural tourism, due to its complementary character, surely could enrich the integral tourism product of Montenegro, creating strategic opportunities for mixing and diversifying existing services as well as generation of new innovative products (e.g., culture and health, culture and MICE). On the other side, hotels need to develop more intensive cooperation with locals, providing in that way their guests with the opportunity to participate in local cultural tradition and life. Also, local food and drinks have to find their steady place in menus of the local hospitality industry. Hence, it is of strategic importance to develop closer relations between cultural and other more popular and/or profitable forms of tourism, as often suggested in theory and practice (Jovicic, 2016). This could provide diversified products and better opportunities for more sustainable commercialization. As previously, mentioned, economic leakage is seen as a quite disturbing concern in typical "3S" destinations and transition economies. Namely, the "sun and sea" are still the most dominant products with a significant share of over 90% in Montenegro. Provision of new services and products in cultural aspects by the local community and economy could be suggested to reduce the leakages. Interestingly, integration into international networks, organizations, cultural routes, and other forms of cooperation could provide a great number of benefits. There is a wide number of good experiences and scholars indicate positive experiences of theme routes/trails as a tool that can further improved tourism growth (e.g., Meyer-Czech, 2003; Soteriades et al., 2009; Demonja and Ružić, 2012; Hall and Mitchell, 2008; Bruwer, 2003; Telfer and Hashimoto, 2005).

### *Sustainable and responsible development*

Cultural products have to be harmonized with the economic, environmental, and social context. However, such a general statement requires an effective local implementation approach to be sustainable and more important accepted by locals. This implies the necessity to invest in local innovative abilities as well as communicate with them every aspect of the development process (e.g., image creation, new product, pricing). There is a growing necessity for further investment and other actions in the area of education and awareness about the benefits of cultural tourism, especially in sense of responsible commercialization, efficient preservation, opportunities for new ideas, socio-cultural importance, etc. For example, the introduction of modern technological opportunities could attract locals, especially talented and young entrepreneurs into the local cultural industry. The development of cultural tourism has to have the support of the local population. To achieve this, locals need to be involved in the process from the beginning, planning phase, implementation, and finally control or monitoring. In line with this, the dynamic and flexible framework should be developed and offered to locals to provide their

engagement. Unfortunately, with more static and fixed approaches is not possible to obtain the necessary support. In other words, poor profitability could be neutralized by abandoning the “ad-hoc” approach in planning cultural tourism.

### *Support for the local community*

Another important issue is the potential lack of funding that could provoke a slowdown in the creation of complex and innovative products. In this situation, support has to be obtained from other stakeholders such as the hotel industry, local tourism organizations, local authorities, etc. Also, lack of knowledge of foreign languages (e.g., German, French) creates an obstacle for development. Closely related to foreign languages are the storytelling competencies that could help as a mean of presentation of local immaterial cultural heritage (e.g., myths, legends, customs), tangible components (e.g., food), the interpretative technique in museums, visitor centers, farms, eco-villages and effective marketing tool to distribute memories of tourists to other tourists, operators, and media. That is why constant training has to be obtained for all age groups of potentially interested individuals (e.g., students, volunteers, professionals, local authorities, rural community) for different skills and competencies. Additionally, raising awareness of locals about preservation, revitalization, valorization, and promotion of cultural heritage has to be the priority that is constantly fostered via financial and non-financial measures and actions (e.g., workshops for school children, study trips for entrepreneurs, educative events).

## **Conclusion**

### *Summary of the research*

This paper discusses the most relevant issues related to cultural tourism and community engagement in Montenegro. Key findings indicate the need for a systemic, dynamic, and innovative framework for sustainable and highly impactful heritage tourism in Montenegro, which policymakers, heritage ventures, and other stakeholders might use to strengthen community engagement and development at the heritage sites. The local community has to be encouraged as the driver of tourism entrepreneurship while key elements of destination competitiveness could be found in process of diversification of the offer with a focus on typical local distinctive cultural styles and resources that are worth visiting year-round. But this theoretical concept needs effective technical operationalization where tourism revenue has to be channeled into conservation, promotion, education, and development of local community and heritage. Followed by other non-financial support (e.g., training), this systemic framework can maximize benefits for culture, tourism, and the local community.

### *Practical implications*

As cultural tourism in Montenegro continues to grow, destination marketers and managers will face the strategic challenge of developing a more systemic and professional, but flexible at the same time, approach towards the host community. Based on this principle, several practical implications should be pointed out.

First, a further increase in demand for authentic cultural experiences will require more professionals to develop and manage such products. Consequently, more training opportunities need to be provided in the future. Locals have to be supported and educated on how to commercialized resources as final independent products or as a segment of wider “visitors’ experience” (e.g., excursion). In addition, training could help the host community to select those experiences that are more suitable for tourists. Priority areas of training should be a specialist in gastronomy, rural tourism experts, event managers, storytelling specialists, tour/route guides, etc.

Second, the public sector has to encourage the host population to develop its forms of tourism products. Local themes and local cultural heritage (e.g., intangible heritage) are an important source of authenticity and competitiveness in tourism. Development of such local and special products is a more competitive approach than the imitation of already existing “mass” cultural events or programs with questionable value. Based on previous research, valorization and commercialization have to be undertaken by the private sector, with appropriate support from the public sector. In line with this, special programs and plans have to be designed to protect authentic attributes, especially those (e.g., handicrafts, agricultural practices) facing disappearance, distortion, or trivialization.

Third, competencies related to narrative and interpretation technics are necessary to commercialize existing tangible and intangible heritage. Since the local community has to play the role of originator and interpreter of cultural narratives/stories, it is crucial to invest in and support human resource training together with marketing, innovation, and technological support.

Fourth, the management mechanism in destination has to be improved to maintain lasting growth in this sector. For example, to obtain continuous communication with the host community as an important stakeholder, there is a need to identify a leader that is willing to promote the idea of participation and cooperation, or can organize the community and help to reach a consensus within the locals about the development goals. Besides, an efficient mechanism for community participation is seen in a cluster approach that could benefit from the fragmented tourism and cultural sector. The product they produce is the main cohesive factor. Accordingly, networks and clusters are seen as an efficient tools for community participation, both in urban and in less developed, rural areas.

### *Limitations and further research*

This paper offers insight from Montenegro about the role of the host community in cultural tourism development. We hope that this insight could help basic understanding in this area and could be useful for the design of public-support policies in this sector. The key limitation is seen in the fact that this paper is partially based on the results obtained through the HERTOOUR project “Strengthening heritage tourism and community development in Austria and Montenegro”. As such, this research represents just a pilot study into the vast field of cultural tourism. The general insight given in this paper requires further research and data related to complex issues of local community engagement. In line with this, further research of this topic is recommended, especially in the area of technology implementation and innovation generation related to more effective community engagement and heritage safeguarding. In addition, research should empirically analyze the potentials of locals in sense of creating new value and the impact of different measures on this strategic goal. Key limitations are related to more in-depth analysis that is necessary for a deeper understanding of this complex issue.

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## About the authors

Ilija Moric holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the Faculty of Economics, University of Montenegro, obtained in 2015. He is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management in Kotor. His main research interests are within the field of marketing, marketing communications, understanding consumer behavior in tourism, rural development, and rural tourism. The author can be contacted at [imoric@ucg.ac.me](mailto:imoric@ucg.ac.me).

Sanja Pekovic holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the University Paris-EST. She is the Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management. Since October 2017, she was Director of the Centre for Studies and Quality Assurance of UoM. Currently, she is Vice-rector for internationalisation. Between 2006 and 2011, she was the Researcher at the Center for Labor Studies (Centre d'Etudes de l'Emploi) and Lecturer at the University Paris-EST. Her research interests are within the field of quality and environmental economics, the economics of innovation, applied econometrics, and on this topic, she has presented studies at national and international scientific congresses, which have been published in international journals. Ph.D. Pekovic was visiting scholar at the INRASupArgo (Montpellier), at the University of Montenegro (Podgorica), at the Laboratoire CNRS UMI 2615 Franco-Russe PONCELET (Moscow) and the Institute of Environment, UCLA (Los Angeles), etc. The author can be contacted at [psanja@ucg.ac.me](mailto:psanja@ucg.ac.me).

Djurdjica Perovic, Ph.D., is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management of the University of Montenegro. She defended her thesis „The state and directions of tourism development of the Montenegrin coast in the function of a successful market appearance" at the Faculty of Science and Mathematics of the University of Novi Sad. She was the Vice-Rector at the University of Montenegro till December 2020. Currently, she is the Dean of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality. Her research fields are Tourism, Tourist Regions, Cultural Tourism, and Selective Forms of Tourism. She has published more than 30 papers and has participated in more than 20 science conferences. She is the author and co-author of two monographs. She has experience in Heric, IPA, Erasmus+, and bilateral projects. She was a visiting professor at "MESI" University and Russian New University from Moscow. The author can be contacted at [duda@ac.ucg.ac.me](mailto:duda@ac.ucg.ac.me).

Jovana Janinovic is the research and teaching assistant at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, University of Montenegro. Previously, she was engaged as a researcher at Leipzig Graduate School Global and area studies, the start-up scholar at Bielefeld University, and ZEIT Stiftung's pre-doctoral fellow. She obtained her Erasmus Mundus Master Degree from the Charles University of Prague and EHESS Paris in the field of European studies. She also holds BA in Economics from the University of Montenegro and an M.A. in Management from the University of Nice. She presented at academic conferences in Berlin, Dublin, Paris, Florence, Warsaw, and participated in several European training and programs. The author can be contacted at [jovanav@ucg.ac.me](mailto:jovanav@ucg.ac.me).

Michaela Griesbeck holds a Ph.D. in communication science and semiotics and works currently as a senior researcher at the Franz Vranitzky Chair for European Studies, University of Vienna, and since 2002 as a lecturer at the Department of Communication at the University of Vienna. Her fields of research are intercultural communication, social semiotics, and the so-called Generation In-between, the Children of the Balkan Wars, which led her lately to research trips throughout South-Eastern Europe. The author can be contacted at [michaela.griesbeck@univie.ac.at](mailto:michaela.griesbeck@univie.ac.at).