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CULTURE – IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS ECONOMIC GROWTH OF THE COUNTRY

Abstract

Cultural potential of the country can be an important factor in its economic development. The underlying assumption of using cultural potential for the development of cultural tourism is maintenance of buildings and objects of cultural heritage in good condition, their professional presentation and access to a general public.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the fact that culture can play an important role in economic and social development of Slovakia and strengthen its competitiveness in the coming years. On the basis of secondary data it is necessary to analyze selected indicators of the Slovak economy towards residents of the country and also to highlight the development of tourism indicators, which greatly affect the country's economy.

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Introduction

The Slovak Republic has got a huge cultural heritage. Cultural heritage lies in the cultural level of the Slovak nation, national minorities, ethnic groups and individuals, who live or previously lived in its territory. An important role in the culture plays a traditional folk culture with its tangible and intangible products of human activity transferred from generation to generation. The progress of cultural tourism in Slovakia should primarily offer tangible as well as intangible elements of culture

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specific for individual regions in order to increase prosperity of the country and the people living in it.

1. Culture – the driving force of tourism

According to the definition adopted by UNESCO, Culture is „a complex of specific spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or social group, which includes along with art and literature also a common way of life, life style, value systems, traditions and beliefs.” (Dvorsky, 2006).

„Visitors are inclined to accept and believe what their culture tells them regardless of objective validity and to bloc or ignore anything that is contrary to their culture, or in conflict with faith.” (Gúčík et al, 2011).

Accordingly, it is appropriate if the tourist destinations adapt to the cultural and social habits of fundamental values resulting from family traditions, habits and customs. From this perspective, cultural tourism is a form of tourism focusing just on learning about the history, culture, traditions, habits and customs of own country or foreign countries. Table 1 shows the distribution of various historical monuments.

Table 1. Cultural and historical monuments (species)

Cultural and historical monuments	
Architectural secular monuments	Citadels, castles, manor houses, buildings of folk architecture, urban conservation areas, and other cultural and historical buildings
Religious sites	Churches, monasteries, chapels, etc.
Technical works	Bridges, tunnels, dams, etc.
Artistic works and art monuments	Monuments, statues, tools, old weapons, instruments, statuary, pictures, etc.
Folklore	(cloths, art production, dwellings) – intangible origin (songs, customs and traditions, proverbs, sayings and weather lore, etc.)
Archeological sites	Sites in nature and museum collections
Historical places of fights	They are places where the fight took place in the past and are the birthplace of national history
Cultural and educational institutions	Theatres, art galleries, museums, open air museums, memorial buildings

Source: Rašl (2009), own processing

In every culture there are groups of people who have a similar system of values resulting from current experiences and situations. Tourism has got an impact on education, attitudes and values, traditions and customs, human behaviour, and forms of entertainment, etc. The education level of the population affects the demand for tourism and influences purchasing decisions of consumers. Attitudes and values of population determine what is appropriate and what inappropriate for the consumer

in their demand for tourism. Significant elements of culture make a destination on the tourism market competitive. Culture largely influences purchase behaviour in tourism.

On the supply side of tourism, in addition to natural conditions, an important recreational function is performed by preserved folk architecture, cultural and historical monuments. From the perspective of cultural tourism participants, the most important urban conservation areas in the territory of the Slovak Republic may include the capital Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Banská Štiavnica, Bardejov, Kežmarok, Košice, Kremnica, Levoca, Prešov, Spišská Kapitula (Chapterhouse), Poprad, Spišská Sobota, Trenčín, Trnava and Žilina. In the Slovak Republic there are ten conservation areas of folk architecture like Brhlovce, Cicmany, Osturňa, Plavecký Peter, Podbiel, Sebechleby, Špania Dolina, Veľké Leváre, Vlkošovec and Zdiar, as well as 83 monument zones.

According to a survey of Eurobarometer in 2012, the culture and history ranked on the fourth place in tourism incentives. 22% of respondents who were surveyed and had possibility to choose from more answers reported that the main reason for their participation in tourism was culture.

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism the strategies and activities in tourism should result in the interests of cultural and artistic heritage that should be preserved and transmitted to future generations. Particular attention should be paid to the preservation and spread of monuments, museums, and historic sites open to the public. (Global Code of Ethics for Tourism [online] [cited 2014-04-11].

2. Financing of culture - prerequisite for the development of cultural tourism

The main prerequisite for the cultural tourism in the country is undoubtedly the maintenance of historical and cultural monuments in terms of their technical competence, as well as organizing events towards the promotion of live culture. This, however, needs financing. There exist various forms and types of tourism. The authors or particular professions create their own definitions and categories under which they differentiate the various types and forms of tourism. In terms of sustainability we can speak of eco-tourism protecting natural and cultural heritage and maintaining a standard of living of residents in certain destination.

„We can speak of the forms of tourism when we take into account the different conditions and causes that affect it and the consequences that it carries. Types and forms of tourism are found in combination in order to optimally meet the needs of visitors to tourism,, (Orieška, 2010).

The development of tourism can be directly or indirectly associated with the use of cultural and historical potential, which constitutes of cultural heritage, cultural facilities and cultural events.

There was conducted the research in the processing of Marketing Strategy of the Slovak Agency for Tourism for the years 2011 – 2013 to examine the perception of Slovakia by the foreign visitors. The results reveal that more than 35% of the foreign visitors to Slovakia were very satisfied and 42% were satisfied. The most positive features of Slovakia as a tourist destination were: beautiful scenery and natural attractions, cultural and historical attractions, traditions and originality, relax and escape from busy life (Tourism Development Strategy to 2020).

The main prerequisite to the progress of cultural tourism in the country is undoubtedly the necessity to maintain historical and cultural monuments in terms of their technical work capacity, as well as organizing various social events towards the support and presentation of live culture in the regions. These goals cannot be achieved without funding from the state and private investors.

The Slovak Government aims to create conditions for more efficient use of funds for culture through the structural funds and community programmes of the European Union. There will be incorporated more priorities for culture (restoration of cultural heritage, reconstructions and construction of cultural infrastructure, support for education and training in the cultural sector, encouragement of partnerships among cultural sector and other sectors) via operational programmes after 2013. Successful projects of community programmes will be guaranteed by the co-financing from grant system of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic.

Financing of culture can be realized from public and private sources in terms of national, regional or local level. An important role in financing has had European programmes and funds.

Culture financing through public resources can be divided into direct and indirect funding. The direct funding is presented as a support of culture via state subsidies to ensure the public interest in the field of culture and promote the activities of cultural institutions. The indirect funding means a support for culture via tax relief through setting legal or donor environment, identifying priorities and other regulations. (Ministry of Culture, 2014)

Financial security of culture in tourism is realized by revenues from sales of its own production. Moreover, funds can be obtained from the state budget, municipal budgets, culture funds, different grants and sponsorships, various trusts and enterprising in culture, donations and cultural programmes of the European Union. (Tajtakova, 2010) Financing of culture can be done at national, regional or local level as displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Interaction of financial instruments of the public sector to the development of culture

Public sector	National level	Regional level	Local level
Cultural institutions	National cultural institutions	Regional cultural institutions	Local cultural institutions
Own cultural activities and projects of	Ministry or other central body of state administration and the like	Higher territorial unit	Local municipality
Grant support and incentive mechanisms	Departmental grant and support system for non-state entities	Regional grant system of higher territorial unit for culture	Local grant system for culture (if applicable)

Source: Tools of cultural policy. (2011), own processing.

Indicators for the examined period and a forecast to 2015 point to the fact that the cultural tourism could develop favourably towards the Slovak residents in terms of forecasts for favourable development of the economic indicators as seen from the Table 3.

Table 3. Forecast of selected economic indicators of the SR

No.	Indicator	Reality			Forecast			
		year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1.	GDP, current prices	bn €	65.7	69.1	71.3	74.8	79.2	84.0
2.	Export of goods and services	%	16.5	10.8	2.2	8.2	5.9	5.3
3.	Import of goods and services	%	16.3	4.5	0.7	7.8	5.2	4.7
4.	Average monthly wage in economy (nominal growth)	%	3.2	2.2	3.4	4.3	4.7	5.6
5.	Average growth of employment according to VZPS	%	-2.0	1.5	-0.3	0.4	0.6	0.8
6.	Average registered unemployment rate	%	12.5	13.2	13.6	13.6	13.5	13.2
7.	Harmonised index of consumer prices	%	0.7	4.1	2.8	2.3	2.3	2.5

Source: Strategy of tourism development to 2020

Today, statistics indicates an aging of population and its annual growth. This should be taken into account and adapt the offer of cultural tourism to senior's segment. Seniors are in advanced economies considered an important segment of customers, and therefore they may be interesting for Slovak business environment. Senior marketing requires different approach to the use of marketing and communication tools, due to their age group, lifestyle and shared values. We cannot forget the young generation, which constitutes an important segment and is in favour of

multiple forms and types of tourism, and has a broader scope. This segment is important in terms of abundance of free time and free funds that can be used exclusively for themselves. It is necessary to focus on active travel tourism, and adapt to the requirements of foreign participants of cultural tourism creating a favourable business environment towards profitability of businessmen and the republic. The Table 4 presents development of selected indicators of tourism in Slovakia.

Table 4. Development of tourism indicators in the SR

Indicator	2003	2006	2009	2013
Average length of stay	3.6	4.0	4.3	4.8
The total number of tourists staying (in thousands)	3,373	3,600	3,900	4,300
The number of foreign tourists (in thousands)	1,386	1,450	1,570	1,710
The number of foreign visitors (in thousands)	24,984	25,900	26,500	27,200
The number of nights total (in thousands)	12,058	14,400	16,770	20,640
The ands)	4,964	5,800	6,751	8,208
Average expenditure of visitors per day in US\$	46.32	52	60	70

Source: Ministry of Economy of the SR.

From the Table 4, we can assume a positive trend in the development of tourism indicators, but it cannot be considered as a satisfactory situation due to inadequate development of occupancy indicator of Slovak hotels compared to other indicators. The Slovak accommodation facilities in 2012 had one of the lowest utilization of their capacity throughout the European Union. There were only 28% of beds occupied on average. The offer of beds in accommodation facilities in Slovakia has gradually increased. In 2011, there were 17% more beds in Slovakia compared to the year 2000. The increase in accommodation capacity was registered mainly from 2000–2002, and in the period of 2006 – 2009.

Conclusion

Cultural diversity is a driving force behind economic growth through which the values are being created. Ranking of cultural tourism in the country should be stable and should be given appropriate attention in terms of financing and protection of cultural heritage, as well as support of live cultural traditions on all levels from local municipalities to the state itself whether from private or public sectors. Only under these conditions can cultural tourism meet the needs of its participants either domestic or foreign ones, which ultimately leads to economic growth of the entrepreneurial entities participating in tourism services and the state. The aim of this paper was to point out that Slovakia has much to offer to its visitors in terms of culture and cultural heritage and to stress the projected trends in its development.

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