

CONTEMPORARY METHODS AND APPROACHES FOR TOURIST VALORIZATION¹

Michael Risteski, PhD

Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality - Ohrid, University „St. Kliment
Ohridski“ -Bitola, Ohrid,
michael.risteski@uklo.edu.mk

ABSTRACT

Creating attractive tourism products for a particular clientele is a complex task for management structures in tourist destinations. In this regard, it is necessary adequately to valorize the different tourist resources in order for them to be allocated and to be put into action. There are numerous methods for valorization in tourism that are mostly systematized according to the field to which they belong (economic, social and cultural). This research derives from the results of the author's doctoral thesis on this topic. It is important to note that the empirical field research involved the use of contemporary methodological approaches. In particular, used were methodological approaches that have international validity and applicability: European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Destinations Toolkit (ETIS-Toolkit) and valorization of the three tourism destination subsystems: Factors, Attractors and Support Services (FAS-approach). These two methodological approaches for valorization are applied on the territory of the Ohrid tourist area.

KEYWORDS: tourist valorization, tourist destination, tourism development, FAS-approach, ETIS-toolkit.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourist destinations consist of numerous values that allow tourists and visitors to visit them while creating their own different experiences. This results in the complexity of the process of tourist destinations management. This poses the need for proper valorization of all available resources that exist in the particular tourist area. This will enable the various tourist resources to be allocated and put into use with the aim to promote tourism development. Valorization is actually a process that transforms tourist resources into tourist attractions. In the scientific literature, there are different types of valorization, which is often equated with the economic valuation. However, such an approach needs to be expanded, since tourism is a phenomenon that exhibits cause-and-effect relationships with the various spheres of human existence: the social, cultural and economic spheres. Also important to note is that valorization of tourist sites should be in the function of their sustainable development. Contemporary methodological approaches for valorization were used in the framework of the empirical research. Such approaches have global recognition and applicability. They are analyzed in terms of their implementation on a specific tourist territories. Actually, the analyzed territory is the Ohrid tourist area, which was the case study of the paper. Various valorization approaches have been implemented. These approaches relate to different aspects of the tourism process. More precisely, the used methodological approaches are the following: *European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Destinations Toolkit (ETIS-Toolkit)* and *Valorization of the three tourism destination subsystems: Factors, Attractors and Support Services (FAS-approach)*. One of the most important segments of the research component of the paper is the valorization analysis of the resource base of the Ohrid tourist area. The valorization process was conducted in a quantitative and qualitative sense. Such approaches towards valorization has the aim for prioritizing the determined values which is especially important for creating development directions by the creators of tourism plans, programs and strategies (Risteski et al., 2012). Thus, this paper has theoretical and practical significance.

QUANTITATIVE VALORIZATION OF THE OHRID TOURIST AREA

The quantitative valorization performed within the paper refers primarily to the implementation of the *ETIS-Toolkit*. This involves the quantitative registering and analysis of both natural and cultural resources in a given tourism area, analyzed in terms of their sustainable development. In this sense, this system consists of 43 key indicators divided into 4 general categories: Destination Management, Economic Value, Socio-Cultural Impact, Environmental Impact (European Commission, 2016). The amount and type of used subsets of indicators depends on the specificity, needs and capabilities of the tourist destination in question. It is important to note that there is no single model that can be applied to all types of tourist destinations (Risteski, 2019). The four general categories of indicators cover all the different aspects of tourism development mentioned above. This methodological approach to tourism valorization is combined with the FAS – model. The three categories in this model (Factors, Attractors and Support Services) are regarded as interconnected systems that exist in every tourist destination. Although this approach (FAS) is of a more qualitative nature, it can also be applied to quantitative valorization (Risteski & Kocevski, 2018). This system is implemented on the Ohrid tourist area, in terms of the possibilities for development of contemporary and alternative types of tourism, as opposed to the lake-based mass tourism that is already highly developed in this area. More precisely, it refers to the opportunities for the development of rural tourism as a sustainable tourism type, incorporating both natural and cultural tourism values. In the following text an overview of the most important sustainability indicators of this system, applied to the Ohrid tourist area is presented. These categories are valorized in terms of their sustainability, as well as their importance for the rural tourism offer as a sustainable type of tourism. The analysis refers to the rural areas in the municipality of Ohrid and is the result of the conducted research activities within the process of creating a Register of Potentials for Rural Tourism (Jankuloski et al., 2016). The territory analyzed in this project was the South-west Planning Region (SWPR) to which the Ohrid tourist area belongs. The selection of indicators was determined by several stakeholders of different sectors (governmental, non-governmental and business sector) consistent with the European Commission's recommendations in applying the ETIS approach. The data were collected and processed by the author of this

paper. This means that it is an authentic research. The environment is determined through the analysis of indicators and parameters that cover the values of the tourist-geographical position, its land use, bio-geographical characteristics and protected areas as tourist values, as well as waste management in the Ohrid tourist area. These categories are examined through the opportunities for their usage in rural tourism and for improving the overall level of development. A table is presented below that shows some of the processed data and the results obtained from the application of the ETIS approach through various indicators and parameters, while the description and the potential use in rural tourism is presented below in narrative form (Risteski, 2019).

Table 1. Overview of the environmental components of the Ohrid tourist area according to the ETIS Toolkit

Field of research	Indicators and parameters
Surface area and geographical position	- Total surface area of the planning region: 3.306 km². Municipality of Ohrid covers an area of 389,93 km² which is 11,79% of the area of the SWPR. - There exist numerous rural settlements in the Ohrid tourist area (Vapila, Velesovo, Velgoshti, Lakocherej, Elshani, Konjsko, Kosel, Kuratica, Leskoec, Livoishta, Ljubanishta, Peshtani, Podmolje, Ramne, Racha, Rechica, Svinjishta, Skrebatno, Trpejca, Shipokno and others). - International contactability (with the Republic of Albania), while important roads pass through its territory (E-65, E-852, R-501). The international transitness is available through the airport “St. Paul the Apostle”, while connections by water are made possible through the Ohrid Lake. The polyvalence is presented through the numerous natural and cultural values in the area.
Land use and protected areas	- The territory of the Ohrid tourist area has heterogeneous structure. A total of 49,04% of the municipality’s area is covered by forests. - The municipality of Ohrid has a total agricultural

	area of 27.840 ha, which is 71,4% of the total area of the municipality or 20,84% of the agricultural area of the SWPR. The arable land area of the municipality is 23,37% of the total agricultural area (plough lands and gardens – 90,1%, orchards – 4,64%, vineyards – 3,57 %, meadows – 1,69%), while pastures cover an area of 76,63%. - The main protected area in the Ohrid region is the National Park “Galichica”, which accounts for about 47% of the municipality's surface area. Other protected areas are Lake Ohrid (UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site) and the sulfatara Duvalo.
Biodiversity and hunting/fishing grounds	- Important to mention is the woodland vegetation as well as the diverse relict and endemic species within the National Park “Galichica”. Rural areas in the Ohrid tourist region are abundant with herbal species that have medicinal properties (nettle, sage, wild thyme, basil, yarrow, wort, wild iris, dandelion, etc.). - Relatively rich livestock (921 cattle, 196 horses, 6.512 sheep, 1.502 goats, 3.421 pigs, 10.405 poultry), while within the National Park “Galichica” there are 1.644 species (26 are endemic). Lake Ohrid has also rich flora and fauna with many endemic species. - Hunting grounds in the Ohrid region: Karaorman – 14.030 ha, Debrca – 11.550 ha, Brezhani – 12.620 ha, Zavoj – 12.550 ha, Kosel – 8.065 ha, Mesheishta – 3.110 ha, Belchishta – 4.167 ha. - Lake Ohrid has a rich fish stock (17 species of fish, 10 of which are endemic), but fishing is regulated under a special protection management plan.
Waste management	- Approximately 110.000 tons of solid waste is being generated annually in the SWPR (averagely 500,6kg of waste per capita). - A total of 2.184.182 m³ discharged untreated wastewater is being generated annually in the SWPR (this represents 51 % of the total amount generated on the state level).

Rural settlements in the Ohrid tourist area vary in level of development and population density. However, they all allow tourist visitation and accommodation. Connections to border municipalities and planning regions as well as to the Republic of Albania are available. The area is located on the most important traffic artery to the Republic of Albania and has international transitness (through the airport). This provides conditions for development of transit tourism activities and contents that can be combined with rural tourism. The polyvalence of the region and the connectivity with other regions provide possibilities for combined tourism products. Forests and woodlands can be used to develop the timber industry as well as conducting mountain and rural tourism activities. Regarding the forest vegetation, especially important are the possibilities for tourist activities in the form of hiking, photo-safari, bird watching, picking wild berries, medicinal herbs and teas, production of forest honey and so on. These activities are closely related to the development of rural tourism. The following agricultural products are being cultivated in the region: corn, potatoes, alfalfa and wheat, cabbage, tomatoes, peppers, rye, barley and oats. Furthermore, the following orchards exist in the region: apples, cherries, sour cherries, plums and walnuts. An indigenous fruit variety of the region is the Ohrid cherry, while an indigenous vegetable is the Ohrid tomato –“jabuchar”. Pastures and meadows are the basis for livestock activities and farming. The protected area of the National Park “Galichica” has ecological significance and allows educational visits and sightseeings (Risteski & Kocevski, 2015). Lake Ohrid provides numerous water and underwater tourist activities that should be in accordance with the recommendations for its protection. The lake has the status of natural rarity. The sulfatara Duvalo as a post-volcanic geological phenomenon needs to be improved in terms of equipping and presentation of its values. It is an important natural resource for the development of geotourism activities. The diverse vegetation of the Ohrid tourist area allows various rural tourism activities to be conducted, such as: herbal tourism, educational activities, research activities, sightseeing, outdoor activities, picking medicinal herbs, traditional medicine, etc. The livestock fund in the Ohrid tourist area opens possibilities for its involvement in rural-tourism activities through the creation of farms and agritourism development. Visitors can get involved in rural tourism activities in a direct and indirect way (observation, educational activities, petting of animals, feeding, horse

riding, etc.). The fauna in the National Park “Galichica” is protected by a special protection management plan(hunting is prohibited). However, the tourist activities that can be developed in this area are in the form of bird watching and photo safari. The hunting fund in the Ohrid tourist area opens up opportunities for development of hunting tourism and use of gastronomic specialties, animal watching, photography, educational activities, camping and so on. Lake Ohrid with its fishing fund is a favorable area for the promotion of sport fishing and fishing tourism, educational activities, as well as use for gastronomic purposes. Illegal fishing and inadequate lake management are major obstacles for the development of such tourism activities, which should be eliminated in the future. Data on generated municipal solid waste within the SWPR show a relatively high level of waste generated per capita annually, which adversely affects the opportunities for development of rural tourism (Marinoski & Risteski, 2019). The highest level of discharged untreated wastewater is registered in the SWPR, compared to the other planning regions in the country. SWPR accounts for more than half of the total amount of untreated wastewater created in the Republic of N. Macedonia. This implies the need to take corrective actions in order to eliminate this negative situation.

QUALITATIVE VALORIZATION OF THE OHRID TOURIST AREA

This section encompasses the resource base for tourism development of the Ohrid tourist area. Namely, besides the quantitative, it is also necessary to analyze the resources in a qualitatively manner. Thus, it is not enough to simply register and inventory the resources, but to valorize them in order to determine the development directions of tourism (Risteski et al., 2012). The most general division of tourist resources is the division into natural and cultural resources. In the direction of their qualitative valorization, field research activities were carried out. This was made possible through the use of a survey questionnaire within the project „Innovative Solutions for Improved Access to Services at Local Level: Creating a Network for Inclusive Development of the South-West Planning Region of the Republic of Macedonia, Mapping of potentials for development of different types of rural tourism and preparing a Register of Potentials for Rural Tourism“ – implemented by the UNDP and in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Self Government (Jankuloski et al., 2016). The questionnaire directly

derived from the research activities undertaken by the author of this paper and his involvement as the primary researcher in the project. The purpose of the research was to prepare a Register of Potentials for Rural Tourism Development in the South-west Planning Region. The field research was carried out by collecting primary data based on a predetermined matrix. More specifically, it was a primary survey involving 300 respondents who were grouped into specific focus groups. The created focus groups consisted of representatives from different domains who play an important role in the economic and social development within the region (representatives of the local self-government of the region's municipalities, the non-governmental sector, the business community, associations and organizations of rural-related producers, tourism-related organizations, tourism experts etc.). The questionnaire was based on the application of the FAS-methodology, developed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in order to make a tourism valorization assessment in a given area. By using this approach, tourism contents could be identified as "Factors", "Attractors" or "Support Services" (FAS). These three interdependent subsystems create the tourist destination. In the following text, only the results for the attractors (natural and cultural) are elaborated in detail, because of their primary tourist-development significance they possess, as well as the amount of the collected and processed data, which is in the interest of this paper. In this sense, analyzed were the natural and cultural attractors of all municipalities in the region, in order to determine the competitiveness of the different tourist areas in the SWPR (Risteski, 2019). The attractors were valorized in terms of their visitation, accessibility, attractiveness and possibilities for improvement and increase of tourist visits. Of the valorized natural attractors in terms of their current state of visitation, highest grades were obtained for the springs of St. Naum, artificial lake Kozjak, Krushino, cave Peshna, river Treska and Ohrid Lake. From these, the Ohrid Lake and springs in St. Naum stand out, regarding not only their visitation, but also attractiveness. These two values are the most visited, not only in the SWPR, but also in the Republic of N. Macedonia (Risteski & Kocevski, 2018). In terms of the attractors' accessibility, best results were obtained for the following: Ohrid Lake, multifunctional area Jasen, Krushino, springs in St. Naum, the rivers Radika, Crn Drim and Treska, the caves Peshna and Samotska Dupka and the gorges along the rivers Treska and Radika. Furthermore, the National Park "Galichica" was assessed with the highest grades, regarding its attractiveness.

The attractors located in the Ohrid tourist area also showed best results in terms of the possibilities for improvement, although they are currently the most developed in the country. They show a large potential for widening the current tourist offer. This shows a high level of competitiveness by the natural attractors of the Ohrid tourist area, compared to the other tourist areas in the SWPR. Namely, around 25 % of all registered attractors in the SWPR are located in the Ohrid region. Even better results were obtained from the valorization of cultural attractors. Regarding visitation, the Ohrid tourist area shows very favorable results. This derives from the high amount of cultural attractors located in this area. These attractors are the following: churches and monasteries – St. Kliment's monastery – St. Panteleimon, St. Sofia, Holy Mother of God Perivleptos, St. John Kaneo, Holy Mother of God – Bolnichka, St. Nicholas – Bolnichki, St. Nicholas Gerakomija, Holy Mother of God – Kamensko, St. Paraskevi, St. Naum, Holy Mother of God – Zahumska, St. Stefan, St. Erasmus; the mosques – Ali Pasha, Zejnel Abedin Pasha and the Turbe of Sinan Chelebi; Samuel's Fortress, fortress at Gradishte, Ancient Theater, Archaeological site at Plaoshnik; the museums – „House of the Robev Family“, Icon Gallery, „Hristo Uzunov“, „Grigor Prlichev“, „Bay of Bones“; then the events – Epiphany-Vodici, Easter, celebration of St. Erasmus, St. Naum and St. Kliment, „Ohrid Summer“ – Festival, „Balkan Festival of Traditional Songs and Dances, „Ohrid Fest“, „Prlichevi Besedi“, „Ohrid Swimming Marathon“, as well as the most important cultural attractor – the urban core of the city of Ohrid. Almost all these attractors achieved higher grades than 4,5. When comparing the abovementioned attractors with those from the other tourist areas, they show the highest levels of visitation and generated income from tourism. Also in terms of the other parameters (accessibility, attractiveness and possibilities for improvement and increase of tourist visits), the cultural attractors in the Ohrid region lead the way. Important to mention is that from the 52 registered cultural attractors, 37 are located in the Ohrid region (this represents 71 %). These cultural attractors are dominant in a quality and quantity manner on a regional, but also on a national and even global level. Such are some of the cultural events in Ohrid (Rakicevik & Risteski, 2017). The cultural values can mostly be used as a complementary content in rural tourism.

CONCLUSION

This paper aims not only to widen the theoretical research and scientific thought, but also to contribute in a practical sense through the valorization of specific natural and cultural values that are most suitable for the development of alternative types of tourism, such as rural tourism. The concept of tourism valorization is still insufficiently used in practice in our country. Namely, the level of tourism development in the country is relatively low (Sekulovska et al., 2018). This paper should widen the use of contemporary valorization approaches. The methodologies used in this paper have international recognition and significance. Important is the implementation of these methodologies on a specific tourist area – the Ohrid tourist region. The research activities and results examined in this paper could be used in other similar tourist destinations domestically and abroad.

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