

Review
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THE PROMOTION OF CULTURAL TOURISM ON THE LEVEL OF BELGRADE AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

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Abstract:

Cultural contents are among the most important elements of the overall cultural offer of big city destinations. The importance of cultural tourism promotion is especially significant in big cities, in their endeavors to create an image of authentic destination and in a psychological differentiation compared to competitive city destinations.

Namely, cultural and natural attractions are the ones by which some city, as a destination, differs from the others, while some other factors of tourist offer (for instance, receptive factors, especially hotels within international hotel chains) offer uniform and standardized services in all destinations.

Key words: cultural tourism, promotion, Belgrade, city destinations.

INTRODUCTION

Promotion of cultural tourism on the level of a city destination, like Belgrade, is a complex activity, for many reasons:

- *bearers of Belgrade's cultural offer are numerous and heterogeneous* museums (around 30), galleries and foundations (over 20), Vinča and other 16 archaeological sites, buildings (Court compound at Dedinje, Old court, Princess Ljubica lodgment), Belgrade fortress with Kalemegdan park, ambiance wholes (Skadarlija, Kosancicev venac, Gardos, old part of Zemun, Savamala), cultural and cultural-tourist events (the Days of the European heritage, FEST, BEMUS, BELEF, etc), about 70 churches and monasteries, libraries, theatres, etc,
- *each of the mentioned contents could be also regarded as an individual tourist product,*
- *bearers of the cultural offer are also different among themselves in their significance from the point of view of cultural and artistic value,*
- *they also differ by the extent to which they are serving the overall city's tourist offer* (of Belgrade regarded as an integral tourist product), that is how and did they adjust to the demands of modern tourism, to what extent did they accept the

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principles of marketing concept and what significance to they attach to promotional activities,

- cultural contents must *fight for time and money of tourists in "competition" with some other elements of attractive and receptive factors*: entertainment (for instance restaurants on water, night life, restaurants, sport, hopping, recreation, etc)

However, the interest of Belgrade as a destination imposes the need for planned and coordinated promotion of cultural tourism.

1. PROMOTION OF CULTURAL TOURISM OF BELGRADE

1.1. Defining bearers of Belgrade cultural tourism promotion

The main bearers are:

- the *Tourist organization of Belgrade (TOB)*, which is at the same time also leader in the promotion of Belgrade as a tourist destination,
- *cultural institutions*. They, more or less, successfully, carry out promotional activities. However, this is frequently reduced to one person in charge of public relations (PR) and individual, mainly modest, publishing activity, which nevertheless is not enough from the aspect of attracting domestic and foreign tourists,
- *City of Belgrade*, through Secretariats for economy and culture, primarily by financing promotional activities, but also by organizing tourist and cultural events and fair appearances,
- the *Tourist organization of Serbia (TOS)* within the promotion of cultural tourism in Serbia,
- *Ministry of culture*, through participation in programs and projects, significant for cultural tourism, through appearances at the specialized events, etc.

1.2. Defining target segments and target markets

The key question from the aspect of the cultural tourism promotion is: *to what extent are cultural contents and heritage important motive for every individual segment of tourist demand to come and stay in Belgrade?*

Therefore, there is a necessity for the implementation of the strategy for concentrated and differentiated marketing, in order to adjust the cultural offer, namely the promotion, to the specific demands and expectations of target segments. It concretely means that for:

- segment of the youth – secondary and elementary school excursions, visits to museums, buildings and ambiance wholes are obligatory,
- business people and congress attenders, cultural offer is interesting only after fulfilling their primary motive, that is doing businesses,
- organized cultural groups, especially those that cruise the Danube, visits to one or two museums (especially the Ethnographic museum) are very interesting as well as touring Saint Sava cathedral and getting to know the ambiance wholes (such as Skadarlija, Knez Mihajlova street),

- transit and nautical tourists (those who sail in their own yachts on the Sava and Danube), cultural contents are not so interesting,
- picnic goers, cultural contents in the vicinity of Belgrade are especially interesting

When market is concerned, promotion of Belgrade cultural tourism is carried out both on domestic and foreign markets.

In recent years, this promotion is directed also to some Belgraders in order to make them familiar with cultural and tourist values of their city, especially through certain events (such as the Days of the European heritage and the Museums night) and free-of-charge sightseeing (organized by the Stari grad municipality), the Belgrade fortress and certain ambience wholes, with professional guides.

1.3. Goals of Belgrade cultural tourism promotion

On first place, these goals should be in accordance with goals of overall activities in promoting Belgrade as a tourist destination.

By promoting cultural tourism of Belgrade, it is intended to achieve the following specific goals:

- *to position Belgrade as a desired destination also for cultural tourism.* It must be acknowledged that Belgrade is recognized (especially among foreign tourists) more as a destination for entertainment and night on town (restaurants on water, night life, good time on rivers, good food) than as a cultural destination (3, pages 4-6),
- that there are much more cultural contents, than currently, for the sake of promotion the cultural offer of Belgrade,
- *to increase revenue from cultural tourism* as a result of including cultural institutions into Belgrade's tourist offer,
- *raising the level of awareness among Belgrade inhabitants* on cultural values of their city, which means overcoming prejudices that Belgrade isn't particularly interesting from the point of view of cultural tourism and tourism in general. This is especially achieved through the realization of the tourist and cultural event, the Days of the European heritage, that has been held in Belgrade since 2002 (in Europe since 1991). It is going on not only in Belgrade downtown, but also in all 17 Belgrade municipalities. In 2007, Belgrade was the host of the central, European observation of this event,
- *providing information on cultural tourism to tourists who stay in Belgrade,* through tourist-information centers – TIC (four within the Tourist organization of Belgrade and one within the Tourist organization of Serbia) and
- occasional information stalls on the Belgrade fortress and during cultural events, for instance the Days of the European heritage,

1.4. Financing promotion of cultural tourism

There are three sources of financing, dominated by the first one

- *budgets* of Belgrade, the Republic of Serbia and Belgrade municipalities. Bearers of cultural tourism promotion and Belgrade tourist promotion still primarily rely on budgetary resources, which must be overcome in due course of time,

- *individual resources of cultural institutions and the Tourist organization of Belgrade*. It concerns resources raised from museums and theaters tickets sales and from touring different buildings. Great deal of these resources are reinvested in promotional activities,
- *donors*. It applies on big domestic and foreign companies (through financing promotional activities), marketing agencies and media houses (through gratis campaigns, free media sponsorship). This form of financing will definitely become more represented and will depend foremost on the ability of cultural institutions to attract donors.

The general assessment is that the investments in the promotion are insufficient, having in mind both Belgrade as a tourist destination² and cultural tourism³. It is especially visible when promotional investments of competitive destinations are compared to Belgrade's (see more 2, pages 106-110).

1.5. Review of promotional activities realization

The review as a phase in managing promotional activities gives answers on essential questions:

- is cultural tourism in Belgrade promoted in accordance with current trends in this field?
- are goals for promotion set on a real basis and are they being realized?
- what is coordination like between bearers of promotional activities?
- has the level of identification of Belgrade as a cultural destination been raised?
- are the resources for promotion sufficient and are they used in an appropriate way?
- are the results of tourist market research appreciated?

The review results can be seen in annual reports (with financial plan) of the Tourist organization of Belgrade and other bearers of promotional activities – cultural institutions (5, page 4-57)

1.6. Instruments of the promotional mix

Belgrade's cultural tourism is promoted through the following instruments: propaganda, improved sales, public relations and publicity.

Not going into more profound analysis (having in mind limitations of this work), by insight into the implementation of every instrument, the following assessments can be given.

² the Tourist organization of Belgrade budget for 2007 and 2008, including financial costs, is about 145 million dinars annually (about 1.8 million euros annually).

³ it is almost impossible to specify what amount of money goes to the promotion of cultural tourism, since financial costs (salaries of employees in Tourist-information centers, designing, publishing and distribution of general brochures and audio-visual sources, that also cover cultural tourism, appearance on fairs, etc) are also serving the promotion of cultural tourism

PROPAGANDA

- *Graphic sources* are planned in two ways: as specialized material (prospectus, brochures, posters, leaflets on cultural tourism) and general material, covering more or less cultural tourism,
- breakthrough is visible compared to the previous period in relation to contents, texts and photographs selection, design, print quality and diversity of graphic sources,
- *circulation* is however still insufficient for more serious promotional activities,
- *the language structure* is still unfavorable. The Serbian language and bilingual form, mostly in Serbian and English, still dominate. It is necessary to complement the existing publications with versions in some other languages – French, Russian, German, Italian,
- distribution is performed in Belgrade (through Tourist information centers, cultural institutions, tourist agencies, etc), in the rest of Serbia (on border crossings, in tourist agencies) and abroad (during tourist fairs, specialized gatherings, in diplomatic representations),
- poor representation of cultural tourism publications on info stalls in Belgrade hotels is visible. Prospectus on catering and entertainment contents are prevailing,
- in the domain of *audio and visual sources*, specialized tourist film on Belgrade's cultural tourism and video clips are lacking. However, it is worth mentioning excellent DVD short movie "The oldest place from ancient times" dating from 2003 and video clips that promote the Days of the European heritage,
- on the official internet sites of the the Tourist organization of Belgrade (www.tob.co.rs) and the Tourist organization of Serbia (www.srbija.travel), cultural tourism is represented in an appropriate way, with numerous links towards cultural institutions and events. All the bearers of the cultural offer have their internet presentations, that mutually differ both in contents and adaptability to tourist interests.

SALES PROMOTION

- Belgrade's cultural tourism is presented on international tourist fairs, especially the one in Belgrade. In 2005 and 2006, special emphasis on it was attached to cultural tourism through the unified cultural institutions appearance. Besides that, in 2007, the Tourist organization of Belgrade had a common stall with the Belgrade fortress company, the Secretariat for economy and the Sava center. The stall's goal was to promote cultural tourism, especially the Days of the European heritage,
- this year, Belgrade's cultural tourism has been for the first time promoted on the specialized fair of cultural heritage destinations, CULTOUR, in Cologne,
- within study travels of foreign tour-operators and tourist journalists throughout Serbia, organized by the Tourist organization of Belgrade and the Tourist organization of Serbia, it is obligatory to visit some museum and building, such as the Princess Ljubica lodgement, the Serbian Orthodox Church museum, the Ethnographic museum, the Vinča archaeological site,

- there are still no tourist cards in Belgrade. They are very interesting and efficient way of including culture in tourist offer. The tourist cards are very popular in numerous European city destinations (see more on 1, pages 8-11)

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Although majority of cultural institutions have public relations manager, this instrument in the promotional mix hasn't been established enough and in the right way. Besides not understanding and realizing the public relations importance in certain cultural institutions, the reason also lies in the fact that they, for the limited budgetary resources, cannot afford good public relations managers.

However, all the forms of public relations are used in the promotion of Belgrade's cultural tourism: press conferences, interviews, reports, awarding tourist prizes, etc.

There are different motives for that: announcements of tourist and cultural events, such as the Days of the European heritage, Museums night, new museum exhibitions and new plays, start of tourist season for sightseeing buildings and archaeological sites.

PERSONAL SALES

Belgrade cultural tourism is promoted also by personal sales, through direct contacts between employees in the Tourist and information centers, temporary info stalls, tourist agencies and cultural institutions on one side and interested tourists on the other one.

Employees in Belgrade Tourist and information centers are well informed about cultural tourism contents. Besides information, these Centers also distribute free publications about this form of tourism.

In the domain of personal sales, Belgrade is lacking phone info center, that competitive, neighboring destinations already have for a long time.

2. OTHER INSTRUMENTS OF MARKETING MIX AS A SUPPORT TO THE BELGRADE CULTURAL TOURISM PROMOTION

Only by analyzing other instruments of marketing mix, such as cultural product, price (museum and theater tickets, buildings sightseeing) and sales channels, possibilities and limitations in the implementation of promotional mix in further development of Belgrade's cultural tourism could be realized.

CULTURAL PRODUCT

Belgrade is lacking a real, attractive museum exhibition that would be, if not the only one then one of the most important motives for the visit to Belgrade. Some big cities in the neighborhood (such as Budapest, Prague, Thessaloniki, etc) utilized visiting exhibitions of, for instance, world renowned painters to attract not only domestic but also foreign tourists (1, pages 5 and 6)

Vinča, although archaeological site of world significance, isn't arranged in accordance with similar sites in the world, but also in Serbia, for instance Viminacijum by the town of Pozarevac,

The Belgrade fortress with Kalemegdan park is also not valued enough from the tourist point of view, compared to similar wholes in other cities, for instance Topkapi in Istanbul.

The revitalization of cultural and historical wholes, such as: Skadarlija, Kosancicev venac, Gardos, Topcider, is necessary.

It is necessary to have more cooperation between different departments and understanding among employees in tourism and culture, as well as education among employees in culture. In that way, they could adjust their contents to tourists, while employees in tourism (receptionists, employees in Tourist and information centers, tourist guides, employees in tourist agencies and travel organizers, tourist journalists) should be better informed about the city's cultural offer.

Belgrade as a tourist destination is lacking programs of the following types:

- touring theaters behind scenery
- touring buildings on the principle of light and sound ⁴
- touring monuments as heritage on cemeteries with professional tourist guides, like in Berlin, Verona and many other cities,
- summer theaters for the best, outdoor plays and ballet performances.

PRICES

Belgrade museums ticket prices (50 to 100 dinars), buildings touring (280 to 450 dinars) and theater tickets (250 dinars and more) are very accessible to tourists. Their price is much lower than for similar contents in competitive destinations (see more 1, page 10).

However, such low prices aren't much helpful in promoting Belgrade's cultural tourism. Modern tourists are ready to pay relatively high prices for attractive and interesting cultural contents.

The precondition for raising these prices are attractive museum exhibitions, reviving and arranging archaeological sites, ambiance wholes and buildings, introduction of completely new cultural contents in the city's tourist offer.

CHANNELS OF SALES

Out of indirect channels, cultural offer is presented through *tour-operators* and receptive agencies (for excursions, foreign tourist groups, especially those tourists who cruise the Danube) and the the *Tourist organization of Belgrade* (for touring buildings and Vinča archaeological site).

The cooperation between cultural institutions and the Tourist organization of Belgrade on presenting cultural contents is good but a stronger and more long-lasting cooperation between cultural institutions and tourist agencies is necessary.

⁴ The point is to present buildings to tourists in different way than classical one by sightseeing with professional guides. Tourists should be able to watch from small distance certain building which is put under *light* part by part with different colors of light, while every change of color should be accompanied by adequate explanation in several languages(*sound*), recorded beforehand and with simultaneous translation.

CONCLUSION

- Cultural contents in Belgrade aren't enough and in adequate way valued from the tourist point of view,
- Promotion of cultural tourism of Belgrade must be improved in qualitative and quantitative sense through: bigger circulation and more diversified language structure of the printed material, designing audio and visual material that is lacking, more serious approach and organization of Public relations service in cultural institutions, introduction of phone info center.
- It is necessary to introduce "tourist cards" as a very efficient way of presenting cultural tourism of a city destination.
- The cultural product itself must be even more adjusted to expectations of modern tourist demand through more attractive exhibitions, revitalization and arrangement of ambiance wholes and archaeological sites, introduction of new contents, etc.

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