



Tourism of remembrance: real economic opportunity for Pelagonia region

Abstract

In the last few years, thematic tourism has shown a very interesting rate of growth and it's seems doesn't affected by economic crisis. however its success, especially from the economic standpoint, depends on some factors, variables which must be taken in account by the local tourism planning. Tourism product must be much more based on local knowledge and territorial identity and not only on local tourism facilities. According to this concept the finding of historical, cultural relation between the destination and the potential foreign country is a good way to improve the emotional quality, which represents the essence of making tourism. Especially when a trip is lived by tourist like a "mission" it becomes an experience that they take home to share. Bitola and its surrounding have the assumptions to make tourism of remembrance a real-sustainable opportunity for local economy.

Introduction

In last a few years, a growing number of tour operators offer thematic package: the event-theme become the reason of the trip and the choice of the destination related to it. Visit a tourist destination through specific interests related, for example, to the culture of the place, looking for an authentic and original offer, is a new approaches in constant growth. One way for the tourist planner and local enterprises to enhance local resources and the destination.

It's universally accepted that the competitiveness of the European tourism industry is closely linked to its sustainability, as the quality of tourist destinations depends to a considerable extent from their natural and cultural environment and their integration into the local community. Long term sustainability must be the basis of thematic tourism, for this reason UE support the development of many products and services for sustainable transnational thematic tourism, e.g. thematic cultural itineraries between different countries, bike paths, eco-tourism, historical tourism, etc.

The trip is directly linked to the destination hosting the event-theme. It has to be underlined that this type of tourism is very broadly based concept and underpins many forms of tourism:

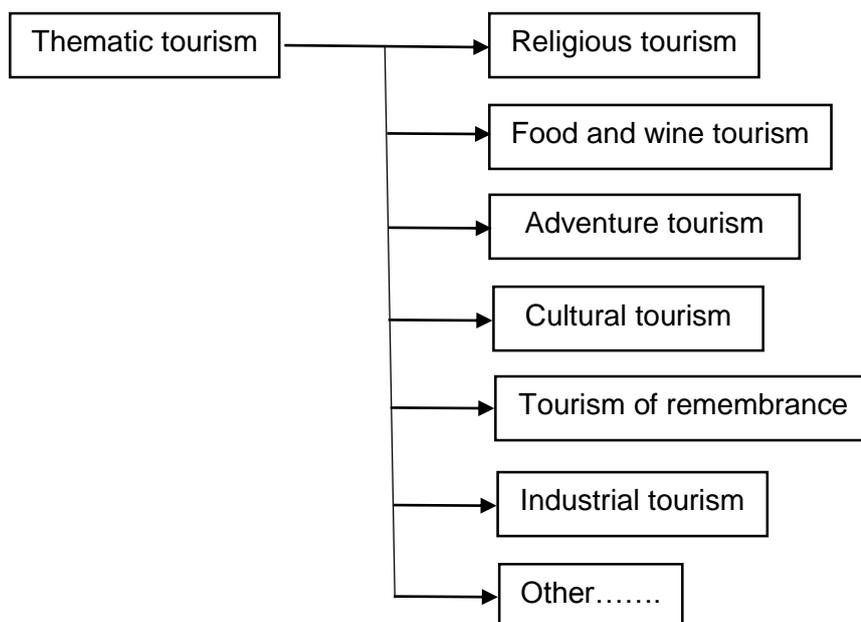


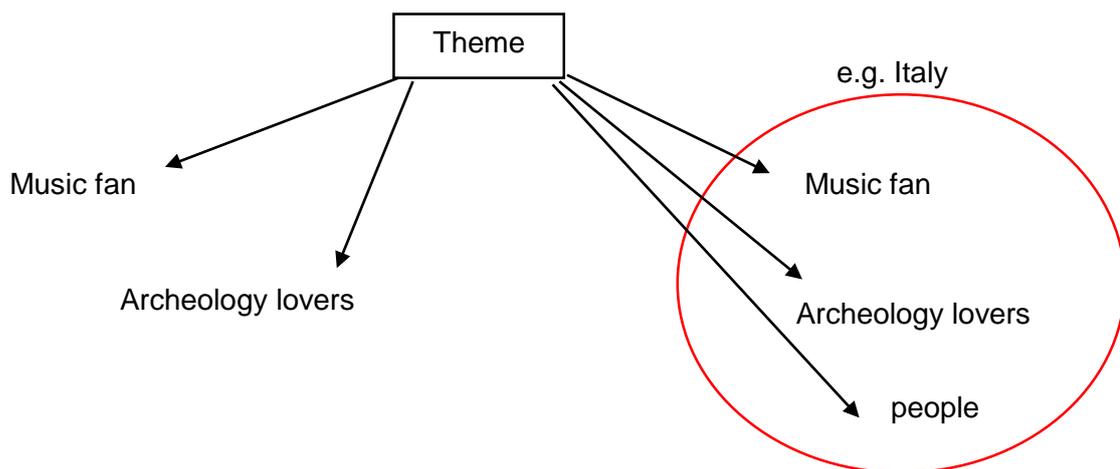
Fig. 1

Official data show that thematic tourism seems doesn't affected by economic crisis. The following table shows some Italian data, but even the European ones are characterized by the same positive trend:

Italy years 2012-2104 (growth)	
Religious tourism	+20%
Cultural tourism	+3,8%
Food and wine tourism	+12%
Natural tourism	+1,5%
Coldiretti, WWF, Bmt Napoli.	

The theme

According to it's nature, the theme can involve or can be the basis of a tourist offer for a specific group of persons, e.g. music fan, archaeology lovers, etc., and/or people related to specific area, countries, etc. (in this second case there is a link between theme and geographic element).



The first category includes, for example, the events of the “Rose Valley” in Bulgaria, the days of the “Marriage of Galicnik” in Macedonia, the so called “Trump Festival” in Serbia etc. which are aspects-events aimed at tourists coming from all countries. The event which usually belonging to local traditions is proposed both on domestic and foreign tourist market, without be focused on specific countries.

Instead, usually, the second category depend on some historical event and/or period, some famous person etc., and often it able to makes a direct relation between the destination and people, or groups of them, belonging to a specific area. Some examples of this category are: the “Via Egnatia” and the “Roman Emperors” which make relations between the Italian history and Macedonia and Serbia, the book “The marriage of the Seven Gypsies” by the Dutch writer Doolaard making a relation between the Dutch and the lake Ohrid, the battle of Dardanelli of WW1 which makes a relation between the town of Cianakkale in Turkey and New Zealanders and Australians.

Of course, these relations increase the visibility-interest for the destination as well as the number of visitors coming from these countries (during the commemoration of Anzac day more than 10.000 visitors descend on the town of Cianakkale, which it would certainly not be a destination with great tourist potential).

In nutshell, Planning Business teaches that study of local strengths and weakness is one of the main steps for the development of local tourist plan in order to exploit the firsts and restrains the seconds.

According to what earlier told, strengths can be divided in two categories:

- **Generic strengths**, which are the aspects and/or characteristics universally valid-appreciated, e.g. natural beauties, air clear, cultural-historical heritage, etc.
- **Specific strengths**, which are appreciated-related by only some categories of people and/or make a relation between the tourist destination and a specific area-country. The assumptions of these strengths are manifold and even language and ethnical matters must make-develop these relations. For example, similarity between the Romanian and the Italian languages helped the discovery of Romania by the Italian tourist market and up to now Romania is the most visited Eastern Europe country by the Italians.

It must be noted that while generic strengths characterize many tourist destinations (many of them have air clean, interesting local architecture etc.), the specific ones belong to only one destination or to a small number of these. This fact becomes a peculiarity-exclusivity, which is a concrete advantage for the destination from the tourism standpoint. Public planner as well as local tour operators cannot neglect local aspects characterized by **specificity** and **exclusivity**.

According to my idea, in fact, specific strengths are often the best way to entry a foreign tourist market. At the beginning the destination will be visited by only specific groups of tourists, e.g. military history enthusiasts, but with the passage of time, thanks to these first visitors, it's reasonable that the destination will become famous and interesting for all other tourist: this relation between tourist destination and a foreign country become a tourist self promotion tool.

For this reason, the study and the finding of these relations must be one of the basic points of the strategy for the development of a tourist destination.

However, local public and private subjects make these relations an important economic opportunity for their tourist destination only if they take in account some conditions and assumptions. Reasonably, these conditions include aspects and actions belonging to three fields:

- economic;
- psychological;
- professional.

Conditions

Economic

An assumption is needed. From the economic standpoint, growing number of visitors doesn't always mean a growing profit, which is the basis of all economic activities, the same is true for economic sustainability. Using a mathematical sentence-form, probably it's "the necessary, but not sufficient condition" in having high profit.

For this reason, according to my experience, the choice and development a project based on economic sustainability must consider many aspects: from the economic to the social, from the structural to the historic, etc.

In nutshell, both profit and economic sustainability depend on the skill to increase revenues and control costs coming from the initial investment and the subsequent running of the activity.

Of course, both these two variables are important, but, especially during the initial development of local tourism plan, the second ones often determine the conditions for reaching the best results from the project. Initial wrong choices regarding the use of the resources, of the investments, the organization of the involved subjects, etc., will lead to a sure failure.

The following tables give some indications and suggestions on the aspects-concepts to be taken in account in choice the project. Same form will be later applied for the case of Bitola and its surroundings.

Easiness					
Low investments	Low cost of maintenance	Low running costs	Good accessibility	Good tourist facilities	Good generic services
Implements paths	Structures	labor	Roads	Hotels	Medical care
Rebuild structures	Tourist paths	services	parking	Restaurants	Service car
Event organization		energy	Signage	Local guides	
		Material goods	Connections	Local info	
				Persons speaking foreign languages	

Table 1

Tourist impact		
Good preservation	Good context	Originality
Original constructions	Landscape	Event
Remains	Climate and seasonality	
Current and historical situation	Famous destinations next	

Table 2

Tables 1 and 2 give indications about the aspects-variables related to the local logistic situation of the tourist destination in terms of tourist facilities, tourist attractions, general services etc., as well as of the characteristic of the tourism project, which must be studied and analyzed.

This part is mainly linked to material aspects of the tourist destination. Public subject (e.g. municipalities, regions etc.) should support projects characterized by low level of investments and/or located in area with good connections, good generic services and tourist facilities etc.

Involvement		
Potential visitors	Values	Other countries
Countries	Morals	UE funds
Categories	Educational	International cooperation
	Patriotic	

Table 3

Related-promoted	
Media	History and culture
TV drama	Traditions and language
Films	Events
Famous persons	Historical persons
Books	Economy-law (e.g. specific agreements)
Documentaries	
website	

Table 4

Tables 3 and 4 are related to the skill of the tourist destination in having some specific strengths according to the concepts explained in earlier part. For example a project involving many countries, or high moral values, or which can be supported by international funding etc., will have higher chances of success. Often the relation between a tourist destination and a country depends on petty reasons like the so called tv drama. Existence of relation with media is a clear help for the promotion of the tourist destination as well as the success of all tourist projects.

It must be noted that these points are often related-linked one each other for example, good preservation of the original constructions probably means low investments, important historical relations often means many potential visitors, some events involve some countries and/or specific categories of visitors, a tv drama that shows the destination to thousands people means lower costs in promotion and advertising, etc. These two tables mainly consider the intangible aspects of the tourist destination.

Psychological (the concept of mission)

This point can be developed starting from the concepts of religious tourism and pilgrimage. According to Costa (1998), pilgrimage is a form of practice of faith that takes place at various levels in the sanctuaries, in the homes of the pilgrims, abbeys, monasteries and convents. Instead, religious tourism should be understood economic and social activity to organize and promote religious tourists, unlike the tourist and pilgrim, not a theological-pastoral identity as a particular type of traveler.

Hence, religious tourist is different from the pilgrim primarily for the reasons of the trip, but both for the first and for the second there is a clear relation between trip and faith. Of course, these reasons are closely linked to the way they feel emotions, without which it is not the essence of making tourism.

Regarding thematic tourism, especially that of remembrance, the project must make a relation between trip and **mission**. The journey is not just pleasure, but plays a social-moral duty: the emotion comes from the visit a place and from the conviction to do something of great moral value. Especially during the economic crisis, when the neighbor is unemployed, when the future is uncertain, when spending money on a trip becomes almost embarrassing, give the trip a high moral profile, a sense of duty, can be the key to success of the destination.

The commemoration of Anzac day in the Turkish town of Cianakkale is a good example of this concept. Usually, we like to celebrate victories and success while try to forget defeats. Instead, in the case of Cianakkale, every year thousands New Zealanders and Australians descend on this town, in order to celebrate the battle of Dardanelli, which was a great defeat of their army during the WW1. There no doubts on the fact that duty to remember and honor the soldiers who lost their life for their country, is the justification of a trip 12.000 km long. The historical negative event (the military defeat) assumes less importance then the moral obligation to remember their compatriots, maybe grandparents, uncles, who died in Turkey 100 years ago. The matter is moved on the human and assumes the character of the mission, and in my opinion, this is the reason of its success.

Professional (the concept of pathos)

Tour operator well know that success of their offers often depends on the professionalism of tourist guides whose activity comes from the solution of the problems happening during the trip to the promotion of the tourist destination through the storytelling of local culture and traditions, historical heritage, local curiosities etc.

Usually, increase in personalized itineraries, the so called tailor made tourism, requires tourist guides with high level of professionalism and great skill to propose new ideas and solutions "ad hoc".

However, tourism of remembrance is very different from the other ones due to the contest which characterizes the trip: it's very different to speak about an existing church (in front of you) rather than a battle when now its battlefield is covered by new buildings, road etc. In this case, the success of the tourist offer depends a lot on the ability of the guide to convey to his guests the feeling of the historical event, he has to reach the imaginary of the visitors giving them an emotion and a great remember of the place to bring home. I call it "**pathos**".

Moreover, a good result needs visual supports for the reconstruction of the historical events and, of course, this is a duty of public subject.

The case of Bitola and its surroundings

During WW1, after the defeat of Dardanelle (end of 1915), the British and French troops were transferred to Thessaloniky. The year after on the so called Macedonian Front was also transferred, the reorganized Serbian army and one Italian division. In November 1916 the Allies took the control of the town of Monastir, the current Bitola and Part of Pelagonia Plan, while the Bulgarian-German troops controlled the mountains around the town till the end of the War. The famous Hill 1050 has been conquered by Allies in summer 1918. Hence, Bitola and its surroundings were part of the front for 3 years.

The Bulgarian-German line followed the crest of the mountains comprised within the loop to north of the valley of the Marihovo torrent in the eastern part, and that of Hill 1050 in the western part, and then crossed the plain to a point north of the village of Novak on the area of the River Cerna. The Allied line was a little below the crest, but at many points very close to that of the Bulgarian-German. Its total length within the loop was about 25 km., of which the western part (a little more than half) was held by the Italians, and the rest by the French.

This fact makes the surroundings of Bitola one of the most important place and rich in historical sites of the Macedonian front, among them the most famous-important military points were: Hill 1248, Hill 1050, the Piton Brule and the Piton Rocheux. Other interesting place of the Macedonian Front is the area of Dojran.

Hence, Bitola area seems to show the basic conditions for the development of a successfully local tourism of remembrance, however a further analysis is needed. The present analysis is based on the concepts and method earlier shown. The present part includes a valuation of the conditions and the tourist potentiality as well as the conclusions.

Conditions

The analysis applies the earlier concepts to the case of Bitola and its surroundings on the base of information obtained through my surveys and direct visits of the studied area. Other information come from my experience as tourist advisor for public and private subjects. The level of the studied aspects, in term of their played positive role for the development and success of the project, have been evaluated using the following Likert scale:

Level of the conditions	
1	Very bad
2	bad
3	medium
4	good
5	Very good

Easiness		
Low investments		
Implements paths	Several interesting places can be easily reached through some walking trails a few hundred meters long. Only signage and very cheap works are needed. 5 minutes waking all visitors can reach the Italian defensive lines on the so called "Mamelons of Lebac," or the German first line.	5
Rebuild structures	Most bunkers and dugouts are in good conditions, hence only the cleaning of some of them and the rebuild of some part of the trenches are needed.	5
Low cost of maintenance		
Structures	Cleaning of the bunkers, dugouts and trenches.	5
Tourist paths	Take off the shrubs	5
Low running costs		
labor	Periodic inspection of a person	5
services	Especially tourist promotion and advertising	3

energy	None	5
Material goods	materials for cleaning and maintenance	5
Good accessibility		
Roads	Good paved road and proximity to a big city	5
parking	Parking for bus and cars	4
Signage	Sufficient road signage	4
Connections	Bitola is connected by trains, close to the airport of ohird and Greece, but far from the capital	4
Good tourist facilities		
Hotels	Good choice in Bitola	5
Restaurants	Good choice in Bitola	5
Local guides	In Bitola	5
Local info	In Bitola	5
Persons speaking foreign languages	In Bitola	5
Good generic services		
Medical care	In Bitola (Macedonian standard)	4
Service car	In Bitola, but not for all type of cars	4
Average		4,6
Tourist impact		
Good preservation		
Original constructions	Good conditions of the bunkers, dug-outs, trenches	5
Remains	Existence of many interesting sites in a small space	4
Current and historical situation	Most context not changed over time	5
Good context		
Landscape	Landscape discreet although penalized by REK	2
Climate and seasonality	Good summer weather and tourist seasons from April to October (7 months)	4
Famous destination	Bitola and Pelister and Galicica National Park	4
Originality		
Event	Chance to organize historical events	3
Average		3,8
Involvement		
Potential visitors		
Countries	Italy, German, French, England, Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia	5
Categories	Travelers thematic, military history enthusiasts, schools, trekkers,	4
Values		
Morals	Human sacrifice for peace, etc	4
Educational	European history, etc	4
Patriotic		5
Other countries		
UE funds	Existence of EU funds and supports	5
International cooperation	Good chance of cooperation between public and private subjects	4
Average		4,4
Related-promoted		
Media		
TV drama	None	0
Films	None	0
Books	Few	0
Documentaries	Few	1
Websites	Several, but not connected to each other	3
Famous persons	None	0
History and culture		
Traditions-language	None	0
Events	This front is almost unknown in most foreign countries	2
Historical persons	None	0
Economy-law	None	0
Average		0,7

Table 5

The analysis of this table shows that Bitola is characterized by a good situation related to the material aspects of the tourist destination: tourist facilities, tourist attractions, general services (average 4,6). Even the tourist impact (average 3,8) and the involvement (average 4,4) are sure

advantages for the development of tourism of remembrance. According to the used method, the destination has most basic conditions to make this form of tourism an economic opportunity for the area: good tourist assumptions, good tourist impact, large number of potential tourist foreign markets.

However high level of involvement, very few tourist destinations have potential relations with 7 countries, doesn't lead to high level of relations with these tourist markets due to the wide lack of enhancement and knowledge of the historical events which characterize the tourist theme. As often happens in tourism, good material conditions are not supported by appropriate intangible actions, although the last ones are often the key of success of the project.

Tourist potentialities

The evaluation of the growth of number of visitors of the Pelagonia region related to the development of tourism of remembrance, needs further analysis and data, however from the experience and results of other destinations, some of them are shown below, interesting positive effects on local tourism as well as local economy can be hypothesized.

- year 2010, 6,2 millions tourists visited the French military ossuaries, 45% of them were foreign;
- every year, 20 millions tourist visited the French fortifications, battlefields, memorials and military history museums;
- year 2004, more than 1 million tourists visited the military historical events arranged in northern Italy;
- year 2014, 3,5 millions tourists visited the Italian fortifications, battlefields, memorials and this trend is growing.

Interest for military history is also shown by BBC when it aired some programs on American civil wars, more than 30,000 British demanded brochures of the American Battlefields. In any case, in my opinion, Cianakkale is the best example to understand the potentialities of tourism of remembrance. If this Turkish town is able to attract some thousands visitors coming from the other part of world, for one week a year, there are no reasons to doubt that the same will apply to this part of Macedonia.

In case of Bitola, offers of tourism of remembrance can be interesting for several categories of domestic and foreign tourist-clients e.g: students, cultural, historical, military associations, hikers, etc. Moreover it can be included in all tours of Macedonia and it can be a good daily excursion for tourist coming from lakes Ohrid and Prespa and the closer National Parks.

Conclusions

History is a basic aspect for tourism and it's an important factor-chance for the development of all tourism destinations. Among the researchers, Dean McCannel (1976) "Tourism is not attributable to a single aggregate of business is also the ideological merge between history, nature and tradition, which has the power to reshape the needs of culture and nature".

According to the results of the present analysis, the studied area has the assumptions and potentialities to make the development of tourism of remembrance a good opportunity for local economy. Many conditions are already satisfied and the tourist project must focus especially on the intangibles aspects of tourist management: these are the weakest link of this tourist project. We should not forget that intangibles aspects are basic for the success of the tourism project.

Local public and private subjects must work together in order to solve the weakness and limits shown in this analysis. About that, some suggestions can be the following:

- take a census of all local remains of WW1;

- make virtual support for the guides and the web site (reconstruction of the battles, collection of all photos etc.);
- provide professional education for tourism of remembrance to support local tourist guides;
- make a network of public and private web site on the Macedonian Front;
- develop of a promotion plan (conferences, advertising, tourist fairs, info-press tours, etc);
- make tourist agreements with foreign tour operators;
- encourage any private and public initiative (books, movies, documentaries etc) that gives visibility to the Macedonian Front.

Thanks for your attention

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