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KONTESA SLAVONIJA - INTEGRATED MARKETING OF SLAVONIAN CULTURAL AND NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

ABSTRACT

Leisure activities offered to tourists in continental tourism have much greater importance than in sea tourism. Inland tourism offer needs to be better filled with leisure activities. Cultural heritage and natural environment in continental tourism are just as significant as the accommodation of tourists. Continental tourism should offer high-quality travel activities; tourists have to be motivated to engage in better quality leisure activities and greater daily consumption. The current concept of tourist information supply and the marketing of tourism facilities in Slavonia and Baranja are inadequate and do not contribute to development, which results in a small percentage of (direct) tourist arrivals in the region. In this paper we propose a marketing concept for the cultural and natural heritage of Slavonia as a framework of a macro entrepreneurial project in continental tourism, which should offer quality activities to tourists in a European setting and, ultimately, result in increasingly higher daily spending by tourists in the region.

Key words: Continental tourism, cultural attractions, integral marketing, natural attractions

KONTESA SLAVONIJA - INTEGRIRANI MARKETING KULTURNIH I PRIRODNIH ZNAMENITOSTI SLAVONIJE

Sadržaj slobodnog vremena turista u kontinentalnom turizmu ima mnogo veći značaj nego na moru; turistički boravak na kontinentu treba u sadržaju biti kvalitetnije ispunjen. Kulturna baština i prirodni ambijent u kontinentalnom turizmu isto su toliko važni koliko i smještaj. Kontinentalni turizam treba kvalitetnu ponudu sadržaja boravka; turisti moraju biti motivirani za kvalitetnije sadržaje i veću dnevnu potrošnju. Postojeći koncept ponude turističkih informacija i marketinga turističkih sadržaja u nas nije kvalitetan i nije u funkciji razvoja; zato je i mali postotak (direktnog) turističkog dolaska u regiju. U radu se predlaže novi koncept promocije turizma u Slavoniji i Baranji - integrirani marketing slavonskih kulturnih i prirodnih znamenitosti pod nazivom KONTESA Slavonija.

Ključne riječi: Integralni marketing, kulturne znamenitosti, kontinentalni turizam, prirodne znamenitosti

1. Marketing of tourism facilities in Slavonia and Baranja

The content of tourists' leisure time in continental tourism has much greater importance than at sea; Inland tourist visits need to be better filled with content. Cultural heritage and natural environment in continental tourism are just as significant as accommodation. Continental tourism should provide a variety of contents on offer for visitors; tourists need to be motivated to seek higher quality contents and engage in greater daily consumption. The existing concept of tourist information supply and the marketing of tourist attractions in Slavonia are inadequate and failing to serve the function of development. This has resulted in a small percentage of (direct) tourist arrivals in the region and has been discussed in the Croatian Tourism Development Strategy until 2020: [8]

- *Economic development, rising levels of education and general well-being contribute to a transition toward the post-materialist social values of the experience economy. 'The new tourist' is a purchaser of life experiences, adventures and stories, physically and intellectually active, looking to be a participant by seeking journeys that will contribute to his personal development.* (pp. 25)

- *A further growth of cultural tourism is predicted and a great importance is placed on this product for the future growth of the overall tourism sector. In particular, predictions advocate the growth of 'creative tourism', which in some way allows visitors a more active involvement in a local culture.* (pp 26)

1.1. The existing concept of marketing tourism in the region

The existing concept of marketing tourism in the region of Slavonia is framed by the borders of its counties; each county has its own tourist board and their tourism offer is formed on that principle. [12]-[16] This is essentially the basis on which all of the local travel agencies do business. Therefore, Slavonia as a regional destination of continental tourism - with significant natural, historical and cultural attractions – does not exist here. For the sake of truth, it needs to be noted that the Croatian National Tourist Board (CNTB) and the Association of Croatian Travel Agencies (ACTA) do offer Slavonia as a tourist destination via their websites, but only to again provide links to the websites of county tourist boards (CTB). [5] [11] A separate issue, however, are the contents of this marketing offer - from cultural, historical and other attractions to the style of presentation, language and graphic and video formats.¹

With this kind of approach, a tourist staying in Vukovar (Vukovar-Srijem County) has no information about the home of world-renowned scientist and climatologist Milutin Milanković – his birthplace and Museum being located in Dalj (Osijek-Baranja County) – only 10 kilometres from Vukovar [17]. Likewise, tourists in Đakovo (Osijek-Baranja County) will receive no information on the Ivan Mestrovic Memorial Gallery (world famous sculptor) – only ten kilometres away in Vrpolje, just because it is in another (Brod-Posavina) county. [14] We should point out that the list of famous personalities (in the marketing offer) has no global framework, but only the local horizon. It should also be noted that there are no thematic tourist attractions - for example, castles in Slavonia, Nobel laureates and world-renowned scientists, or artists and galleries, or religious heritage of Slavonia, etc.

2. New approach to the marketing of cultural and natural heritage: the project "KONTESA Slavonia"

The "KONTESA Slavonia" (Countess = **cont**inental **t**ourism in **E**uropean's **a**mbient) project offers an integrated marketing of continental tourism sights in a regional concept to achieve:

- a) Better hotel occupancy,
- b) Increasing numbers of visitors to cultural contents (museums, galleries, etc.),
- c) Increasing numbers of visitors to traditional ceremonies;

¹ While CNTB offers travel programmes on its website in more than a dozen languages, the websites of CTBs in the region are available in 2 or 3 languages (but not all of them, because some TB are available only in Croatian). Videos (e.g. of destinations in Baranja) are showing tourist sites without living beings (restaurants, wineries, villages are eerily deserted as if they were hit by cholera - no living creature on the recordings).

This will allow tourists to visit Slavonia and Baranja and fully experience their atmosphere in an EU format. In doing so, they will increase their consumption and spread the word of the values of Slavonia upon return to their domicile environments.

Basically, through this marketing concept Slavonia will be offered as a "nobility" tourist destination (association to the region's historical heritage) in continental tourism, providing high quality services at a European level.²

This project would be implemented in the area of five counties of eastern Croatia (Osijek-Baranja, Vukovar-Srijem, Brod-Posavina, Požega-Slavonia and Virovitica-Podravina). The Slavonia region (22.1% territory of Croatia) has over 800,000 inhabitants, 998 villages, 22 towns and 105 municipalities, and their tradition and natural resources represent a significant - and underused - potential for development of inland tourism. [6]

2.1. The starting points of the project "KONTESA Slavonia"

The project is based on a modern approach to: **(1)** tourists and **(2)** presentation of cultural contents;

- The modern tourist is: **(a)** knowledgeable and **(b)** mobile, and will not be satisfied by merely staying in a local hotel alongside the performance of their professional work (if it is a business trip) or just by taking walks and trying out local food (if on vacation). [4] [7]
- A regional cultural offer is required consisting of: **(a)** events and **(b)** facilities which will animate tourists; offering only local attractions (within a few kilometres from the hotel) is not enough.
- Cultural institutions in local communities must be prepared for tourists visiting their cultural capacities. This includes: **(a)** a modern display of exhibits, **(b)** adjusted working hours of institutions, **(c)** special access for tour groups and **(d)** staff who speak several major European languages.
- Hotels are not just overnight stay (or catering) services; hotels have to become promotional centres for local attractions (along with local tour guides) and managers of visitors' leisure time as well as selling points for services of local cultural institutions. This includes: **(a)** a (modern) setup of notifications on regional sites, **(b)** special access for tourists, **(c)** adjusted working hours and **(d)** staff who know the cultural sites and **(e)** speak several major European languages.

3. The concept of the project "KONTESA - Slavonia"

The "KONTESA Slavonia" project is based on the so-called meet planning (interdependence approach of the base and top) during the implementation of the key settings of the project – which has the following elements:

1. Map of Slavonia's attractions in hotels - in several European languages,
2. "KONTESA" model of communication with tourists,
3. Workshop on culture marketing and preparation of institutions for a strong tourism offer,
4. Adjustment of local cultural institutions to regional tourism industry,
5. Manufacture (and sales) of printed souvenirs displaying the landmarks of Slavonia,
6. Electronic offer of cultural events in the region,
7. Preparation and application of EU projects for the valorisation of cultural heritage for tourism purposes.

3.1. KONTESA Slavonia - sights folder at hotels

In hotel (motel, etc.) lobbies, a KONTESA folder is to be placed containing:

1. "KONTESA Slavonia" logo,
2. "KONTESA Slavonia" project poster,
3. Regional folder with geo-locations of cultural and natural attractions, (Table 1)

² The "KONTESA Slavonia" project was applied to the tender of the Ministry of Tourism (March 2014).

4. Local folder with detailed information on local cultural attractions,
5. Stand with "KONTESA Slavonia" promotional materials,
6. Sale of printed souvenirs and leaflets about the attractions:
 - Flyer: famous people, sacred objects, monuments, castles, traditional festivals, parks, nature reserves and arboreta, etc.
 - Printed souvenirs (book-markers, postcards, posters, booklets)
 - Electronic souvenirs (CD, DVD, USB)

City of Osijek (with rich sacral heritage and monuments) does not even have a regular flyer with a list of churches, nor a list of monuments to famous people; Therefore, the author of this paper launched projects titled "Religious Heritage of the City of Osijek" and "Monuments of the City of Osijek", which will result in two leaflets and 2 luxury publications - as well as city guides and commemorative souvenirs. The projects were accepted by the Tourist Board of Osijek in 2014th [1] [2]

Table 1 Scheme of "KONTESA Slavonia" folder

| OUR HERITAGE | Culture | Religion | Science | Nature |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Famous personalities | Architects | Dignitaries | Scientists | Reserves |
| | Sculptors | ... | ... | Lakes |
| | Painters | | | Rivers |
| Buildings | Archaeological sites | Sacred objects | Birthplaces | Forests |
| | Castles | Cemeteries | Memorial rooms | Mountains |
| | ... | ... | ... | |
| Events | Traditional meetings | Processions | Conferences | ... |
| | ... | ... | | |
| | | | | |
| Institutions | Museums | Dioceses | University | ... |
| | Galleries | Parish offices | Faculties | |
| | ... | ... | ... | |

| SERVICES | Travel | Accommodation | Gastronomy & enology | Leisure time | Health |
|-----------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | Bus | Hotels | Restaurants | Bicycle routes | Hospitals |
| | Railroad | Hostels | Wine cellars | Fishing | Spa resorts |
| | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |

Each of these sections in the KONTESA folder contains brief information about a famous person (object, event or location) at the regional level - and sights that are located in hotel surroundings have more information accompanied by illustrations. This criterion will be supplemented by the appropriate choice of leaflets and souvenirs for hotels and locations.

Similar "KONTESA Slavonia" folders will be placed in: tourism offices, railway and bus stations, river ports, airports, border crossings and the seats of regional and local government - as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Locations for "KONTESA Slavonia" folder placement

| N° | Category | N° of locations |
|-------|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Tourist offices and information points | ca 150 |
| 2 | Hotels (hostels, motels, campgrounds) | ca 200 |
| 3 | Railway stations | ca 30 |
| 4 | Bus terminals | ca 30 |
| 5 | River docks | 6 |
| 6 | Airports | 1 |
| 7 | Border crossings | 14 |
| 8 | Seats of regional and local administration | 127 |
| Total | | ca 560 |

The "KONTESA Slavonia" folders are to be made available (in multiple European languages) on the tourist office websites of counties, cities and municipalities in the region of Slavonia and Baranja.

3.2. Implementing the "KONTESA" model of communication with tourists

In association with hotel (motel, camping, ...) managers and tourist guides, appropriate models of communication with tourists will be implemented among reception, sales and marketing staff to include: (a) basic knowledge of the cultural sites of Slavonia, (b) basic education about communication with tourists and (c) ability to communicate in several European languages. If necessary, there will be workshops with staff that is in direct communication with tourists.

3.3. Workshops on culture marketing

In association with cultural institutions, workshops will be held to provide training on marketing culture and preparation of these institutions for a strong tourism offer, which includes: (a) basic awareness of tourist visits in the region, (b) basic education about marketing and communicating with tourists and (c) adjusting existing and/or preparing thematic setups of exhibits with information in a number of European languages, (d) establishing the framework of investment projects by institutions – seeking to apply for EU funding, aimed at strengthening the tourism offer.

3.4. Adjusting cultural institutions for regional tourism offer

The workshops on marketing culture and preparation of these institutions for a strong tourism offer will be followed by their adaptation to regional tourism offer (if need for such activities is pointed out during analysis).

3.5. Manufacture (sales) of printed souvenirs of Slavonia's cultural heritage

Within the project "KONTESA Slavonia" – and only in its initial stage – printed souvenirs (book markers, postcards, posters, booklets) related to the cultural heritage of Slavonia will be created and made available in several European languages, with multiple levels of quality (grayscale and colour printing) and at affordable prices. In this way, the tourism offer will be complete and these will at the same time serve as promotional materials for future visitors. Also, such souvenirs will provide additional revenue to hotels and cultural institutions.

3.6. Electronic offer of cultural events in the region

An electronic version of the "KONTESA Slavonia" folder will be made available on the tourist office websites of counties and cities (municipalities) in the region of Slavonia with appropriate texts and illustrations and will also be accessible via smartphones.

3.7. EU projects for the valorisation of cultural heritage for tourism purposes

In cooperation with county development agencies, tourist boards and cultural institutions as well as hotels, investment projects aimed to enhance the availability of cultural heritage for tourism purposes will be prepared (where needed) for EU funding.

* * *

Conceptually, contextually and spatially, the project "KONTESA Slavonia" is in full compliance with the implementation of the objectives of the Croatian Tourism Development Strategy until 2020 and tourism development plans in the five counties of eastern Croatia.

4. Implementation of the project "KONTESA – Slavonia"

Joint action towards an investor or suppliers, or joint work to find solutions to legal, economic or technical issues are the most common triggers for considerations about merging businesses. Economic practice has created a variety of forms of business association, among which very significant at this time is - consortium. [3]

The "KONTESA Slavonia" project is set up conceptually, and during its implementation it will be further developed and supplemented based on the bottom-up approach, and, taking into account local specificities, a promotional mix will be elaborated. [6] [10] For the purposes of the implementation of this project, a consortium of small companies has been established, currently comprised of:

1. Panon - Institute for Strategic Studies, Osijek
2. Alberta Ltd. Osijek
3. Biroprint Ltd. Osijek
4. Ladarice Ltd. Čepin
5. Geoprem Ltd. Osijek

These companies have signed a letter of intent on the implementation of the project; the consortium is open to other participants (hotels, tourist associations, development agencies, etc.) from Slavonia and Baranja. The project includes 11 groups of activities, its estimated time of completion being 10 months, and its total cost (excluding VAT) amounting to 440,000 HRK.

5. Conclusion

This paper discussed the importance of marketing in continental tourism on the example of the Slavonia and Baranja region. Continental tourism should offer quality contents to visitors; tourists need to be motivated to seek higher quality contents and engage in greater daily consumption.

Our analysis showed: In the current concept of its tourist information supply and marketing of tourist attractions, Slavonia as a regional continental tourism destination (with significant natural, historical and cultural attractions) is not present in the region's tourism marketing since all programmes are restricted by the borders of counties. Each county has its own tourist board and their tourism offer is essentially based on this principle. A separate issue are the contents of this marketing offer – from the cultural, historical and other attractions to the style of presentation, language and graphic and video formats - scores cannot be satisfactory.

The paper presents the project "KONTESA Slavonia" that offers an integrated marketing of continental tourism sights in a regional concept, allowing tourists to visit Slavonia and Baranja and fully experience their atmosphere in an EU format. Basically, through this concept Slavonia is offered as a "nobility" tourist destination (association to the region's historical heritage) in continental tourism, providing high quality services at a European level.

This project has been proposed for implementation as part of a Ministry of Tourism call and will be carried out in the area of the five counties of eastern Croatian (Osijek-Baranja, Vukovar-Srijem, Brod-Posavina, Požega-Slavonia and Virovitica-Podravina). The Slavonia region (22.1% of the territory of Croatia) has

over 800,000 inhabitants, 998 villages, 22 towns and 105 municipalities and its tradition and natural resources are a significant - and underused - potential for development of inland tourism.

The implementation of the project "KONTESA Slavonia" is to achieve: a) improved hotel occupancy, b) increasing numbers of visitors to cultural events, and c) increasing numbers of visitors to traditional ceremonies. In this way, tourists are expected to increase their consumption and, at the same time, spread the word of the values of Slavonia on return to their domicile environments.

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