

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS IN TOURISM IN SLOVAKIA

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Slovakia ranks among the countries with the highest concentration of castles in Europe. At the beginning of the 20th century castles in Slovakia drew the focus of various tourism institutions and later the state. Many now serve as museums. The aim of the article is to evaluate the role of castles and manor-houses as a cultural attraction in Slovak tourism. To analyse the role of castles and manor-houses, the primary and secondary sources were used. The data were processed by the method of descriptive statistic. The article deals with the number of visitors in the most visited castles and manor-houses in Slovakia, tourism products and services provided by castles and the satisfaction of visitors with castles services.

Key words: cultural tourism attraction; castle; Manor-House; services.

Introduction

Culture and cultural attractions are part of cultural tourism. These attractions are able to stimulate tourism demand and support creation of tourism products. Culture is a source of cultural tourism as well as a source of knowledge of the past, present and future. Cultural attractions include, inter alia, castles and manor-houses (chateaux). The cultural tourism is one of the most popular reason for going on holiday in European Union countries and Slovakia too. Castles and manor-houses in Slovakia are managed by different subjects, mostly as a museum. Nowadays, in order to be attractive mean present history as entertainable as possible. It is also necessary to offer “a well-tailored product”. These means that museums cannot only present their artefacts, they must create a memorable experience using attractive presentation, animation and multimedia. To what extent do these requirements apply in museums - castles and chateaux in Slovakia, is part of this article.

Theoretical background and methodology

There are different approaches to define attraction. Sládek [8, p. 35-39] identified 40 attractions in Czechoslovakia and compare them with 29 countries with developed tourism. Czechoslovakia had all the compared attractions, except the sea¹.

¹Attractions in terms of developed tourism: (1) characteristic of state, (2) way of life – characteristic of residents, traditions, architecture, handicrafts, traditional celebrations, specific food and beverage, (3) towns and tourism resorts – recreational resorts, (4), natural attractions – caves, mineral springs, geomorphological features, protected areas, zoological and botanical gardens, (5) zones of silence, (6) hunting, (7) fishing, (8) historical and cultural places, (9) historical attractions – archaeological attractions, sacral attractions, town reservations, technical monuments, (10) cultural attractions – galleries, museums, memori-

In the field of tourism theory, this term was used more often in the 1970s [1; 14]. The discussion regarding the role of cultural attraction in tourism was also part of the Faculty of Economics MBU' VEGA Project "Cultural Potential of Slovakia as a Factor of Tourism Offer in Europe". Currently, the cultural, tourism and the role of cultural attraction in the development of tourism have been examined by several authors [2; 5; 6; 7; 11; 12; 15].

Attractions consist of objects and events, which could stimulate tourism demand. Based on its cultural value, historical significance, natural beauty or entertainment factor, attractions support tourism development in various destinations [5, p. 11]. From the theoretical point of view attractions are part of primary tourism offer. Depending on their character, they determine the development of the type of tourism (e.g. cultural, natural, social), the structure and deployment of the tourism infrastructure, the offering services and the structure of the visitors. Tourism attractions provide visitors with a variety of experience. Kruczek [12] emphasise mostly the social value of experience. From the visitor point of view, Gúčík [3] connects the attractions with the education, sightseeing, culture and entertainment. Kruczek [12] points out only authentic places, objects and events as cultural attractions. He excludes artificially created attractions (tourist traps) that do not have historical, cultural or artistic value, only market value. These attractions provide "incomplete" cultural experiences and focus on "low culture" visitors.

There are various approaches to classification of cultural attractions in tourism. Jarolímková [5] distinguishes attractions according to the type (natural, cultural and historical, social, attractions for entertainment), importance (global, international, national, regional and local), benefits for the visitor (educational, entertaining, aesthetic, social, relaxing, sporting, experiential), character of exposure (without exposure, with classical, interactive or experiential exposure), accessibility (freely accessible or managed) segment of visitors (universal, for specific groups) and fee (free entrance, with subsidized prices, respectively. commercial entry prices).

From the visitors' motivation point of view, cultural attractions can be divided into primary and secondary. Stadtfeld [17] and Steinecke [18] agreed that primary attractions represent the main motive for travelling to the destination. For secondary attractions, visitors decide only at the destination, e.g. the primary goal of spa tourism is spa treatment and other attractions at the destination have only secondary importance.

Tourism attractions are not isolated from the other aspects of destination, therefore they should be offered on the market as part of tourism product. Tourism destination creates complex product if these attractions are linked to tourism infrastructure and general infrastructure including transportation. In Slovakia, this is especially true when connecting cultural routes (e.g. Gothic Route, Iron Route). Nowacki [15] highlights the most common barriers to cultural attractions, such as accessibility, high entry fee and lack of visitors'

al building, theatres, concert halls, (11) international events – cultural, business, scientific, sport events, (12) spa and healthcare baths, (13) sea, (14) summer sports, (15) winter sports, (16) climbing and hiking, (17) entertainment, (18) technical attractions.

time. In order to be a major motive for travelling, visitors must be made aware of them [13]. Tourism attractions create a significant competitive advantage of the destination in the tourism market.

The man-made attractions involve mostly cultural and historical objects, organized events, social and entertainment attractions. Slovakia is a country rich in architectural monuments (castles, manor houses, chateaux, historical centres of towns), sacred and religious sites (churches, monasteries, synagogues, etc.), architectural buildings (museums, galleries, theatres, historical libraries, marketplaces, etc.), archaeological locations, objects of folk architecture and open-air museums, important places (birthplaces, pilgrimage places), artworks (statues, fountains), folk art, technical buildings (already unused industrial buildings, mines and mining ruins, mills, stadiums, bridges, viaducts, tunnels, cableways), military monuments (historical battlefields, military cemeteries) as well as organized events (cultural and folklore festivals). These cultural attractions make a significant contribution to the country image as the carriers of knowledge, history and entertainment.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites ICOMOS [4] refers to cultural heritage and highlights natural and cultural environment, which has been created and created in the past and has been preserved to the present. It points out that, in the time of increasing globalization, the preservation, conservation and presentation of the cultural heritage of each place or region is the task of us all, but in particular, tourism organizations. Their goal must be to know the value of their cultural heritage and to preserve it as a significant attraction for tourism. In Slovakia, 5 heritage sites and 2 natural heritage sites have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List¹.

In Slovak literature, museums and cultural events are examined as a part of cultural tourism, accompanied by their economic activity, generating both economic effects and, on the other hand, attracting visitors that threatens the preservation of cultural values. The use of cultural attractions in tourism should respect sustainability, its social, economic and environmental objectives [9].

Cultural attractions have different forms as part of the tourism product. In terms of marketing, there are three levels of cultural attractiveness as a tourism product. Depending on the satisfaction of the primary needs of visitors (e.g. learning, distraction, entertainment), it is the experience that visitor receives from the visit (the so-called product core). The real (tangible) product helps to better meet the needs of visitors (e.g. museum exposition, archaeological site, event program, interpretation). The extended product brings added value - something extra for which a visitor does not pay and but it exceeds his expectations (e.g. a memorial item for free).

The aim of this article is to evaluate the role of castles and manor-houses as a cultural attraction in Slovak tourism. The article focuses on top ten

¹ Cultural heritage: Castle of Spiš and its environment, Banská Štiavnica and Vlkolínec, historic town Bardejov, wooden churches of the Slovak part of Carpathian Mountain Area and town Levoča.

Natural heritage: caves and abysses of Slovak karst and Dobšinská Ice Cave, the Carpathian Beech Primaeval Forest in Carpathian Mountains.

visited castles and manor-houses in Slovakia. The secondary data were obtained from the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, the Slovak National Museum¹ and selected castles. To analyse visitors' opinions, the data from primary research were used, which was held in 2017. The primary data were supplemented with secondary data from the travel blog website – tripadvisor.com. The data were processed by the method of descriptive statistic.

Results

At present, there are more than 180 castles and castle ruins in Slovakia, of which 21 (best preserved) are managed as museums. In addition, there are approximately 425 manor-houses and châteaux, of which 20 are open to the public as a museum[21]. The castle is a medieval fortified building, which (in the past) had military, defensive, representative, economic, power and political function. The manor-house represents a noble representative residence, usually situated in the natural environment with a park or garden[10]. In the past, the castles had mainly defensive and residential functions, later they were rebuilt for the representation and improvement of housing for the aristocracy [16]. Since 2002, it is possible to monitor the growth of the number of restored castles, most of which were in ruins (e.g. castle Strečno). The reconstruction is financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic.

The EU recognises the importance of culture as part of the European tourism experience and as an element that can enhance the profile of Europe as a global destination. The development of cultural tourism is related to museums (including castles and chateaux), galleries, cultural monuments, archaeological sites, musical, theatrical and film festivals, exhibitions, social and religious events. The cultural tourism is one of the most popular reason for going on holiday in European Union countries and Slovakia[19; 20] (table 1).

Table 1

Cultural tourism as a major motive for going on a holiday (%) [19, 20]		
Country/ Year	2008	2015
European Union (average)	24.0	26.0
Slovakia	26.1	24.0
Motive for returning to the destination		
European Union (average)	-	14,0
Slovakia	-	14,0

In 2015, more than a quarter of the European Union population (26%) participated in tourism to learn about culture, cultural and historical attractions or visit cultural event. An approximately equal share of Slovakia population (24%) mentioned the cultural heritage as the primary motive for participation in tourism. For 14% of respondents from the EU and Slovakia, participation in cultural tourism and previous experience is a top re-visit motive for returning to the destination.

One of the most important cultural attractions are museums. In the Register of Museums and Galleries of the Slovak Republic headed by the Ministry

¹SNM.

of Culture, 112 museums were registered (December 31, 2016), including 18 specialized SNM museums. In 2016, the museums recorded 4,844,341 visitors. With the exception of the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising in Banská Bystrica (323 thousand visitors), the most visited museums are situated in the objects of castles and manor houses (e.g. SNM – Spiš Museum–Spiš Castle, Orava Museum–Orava Castle, Bratislava City Museum – Devín Castle)(table 2).

Table 2

Most visited castles and manor-houses/ chateaus in Slovakia

Castle (manor-house) /Year	2008	2016	Change %
Spiš Castle	186,757	209,104	11.97
Orava Castle	210,273	182,334	-13.29
Devín Castle	96,628	175,077	81.19
Trenčín Castle	90,032	152,000	68.83
Bojnice Chateau	187,032	126,015	-32.62
Stará Ľubovňa Castle	103,457	120,389	16.37
Strečno Castle	60,481	113,730	88.04
Bratislava Castle	88,692*	88,386	-0.35
Betliar Chateau	67,523	67,706	0.27
Červený Kameň Castle	112,806	63,889	-43.36
Total	1,132,279	1,298,60	14.69
Number of visitors in Slovak museums	3,868,120	4,844,31	25.24

Note: *the number is from 2007, in 2008 the castle was only partially accessible (17,290 visitors); source [22].

In 2016, 1.3 million people visited selected castles, i.e. 15% more than in 2008 (the last year of the global turbulence boom). The most visited is the Spiš Castle, which is administered by SNM – Spiš Museum. The castle, together with its surroundings, is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Strečno Castle, Devín Castle and Trenčín Castle recorded the highest increase in the number of visitors. The number of visitors decreased in Červený Kameň Castle (by 43%), Bojnice Chateau (by 33%) and Orava Castle (by 13%). The number of visitors in selected castles account for more than a quarter (27%) of the all number of museums visitors in Slovakia.

As time passes even ordinary people try to preserve or reconstruct damaged castles. Thanks to municipalities and volunteers from civic associations,

several buildings have started to be renovated. Since 2011, there is even a programme subsidised by the state which enables the long-term unemployed to work on renovations of castles. For volunteers reconstruction has become a sort of leisure-time activity which can also be enjoyed even by foreigners staying in Slovakia.

The picture 1 shows the location of the most visited castles and manor-houses, where Spiš Castle (1), Orava Castle (2), Devín Castle (3), Trenčín Castle (4), Bojnice Chateau (5), StaráĽubovňa Castle (6), Strečno Castle (7), Bratislava Castle (8), Betliar Chateau (9) and ĀervenýKameň Castle (10)



Picture 1 – Most visited castles and manor-houses in Slovakia

Note: own elaboration.

In 2017, the comparative analysis of the motivation was conducted on the sample of 543 visitors [16]. The most common motive for visiting castle was the attraction itself and neighbouring attractions in the area (25%), organized events and unconventional tours (21%), recommendation of friends (20%), opening of a new exhibition (10%), entrance fee (7%), UNESCO list (6.5%) and others. Most of the castles and chateaus provide a standard tour with a lecture (68%) or non-traditional sightseeing (32%). Visitors are particularly interested in history and previous holders (40%), legends (35%) and stories from the lives of the castle (25%).

Selected castles offer different services. Visitors may see expositions mapping the history of the castle and its surroundings, as well as occasional exposures, like fauna, a unique collection of objects or life of prominent natives. To expand the possibilities of castles and attract more visitors, museums organizes various events. These events are able to attract a large number of visitors (e.g. in 2016, Castle StaráĽubovňa organized 33 events with a total number of 185 thousand visitors). Selected services provided by castles (museums) are shown in table 3.

Foreign visitors can take tours in the foreign language (most often in English, Polish, Hungarian and German). Some castles offer this service only as an agreement with museum management, as well as rental of premises, making tours accessible to deaf-visitors and professional public for research purposes. At each castle, discounted entrance fee (e.g. for children, students, retirees) can be made. The entrance fee depends on the museum's pricing policy, exposed exposure and additional services (interpretation, translation, participation in the event).

Table 3

Services offered to the visitors in castles in Slovakia

Service/ Castle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Museum tours in a foreign language	●	●	D	●	●	D	D	D	●	●		
Rental of premises	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D		
Night tours	P	P	P	P	D	P	P	P	P	P		
Education programs for schools	●	●	D	D	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Tours for disabled		physically disadvantaged	P	x	x	P	P	x	x	P	P	P
		hearing impaired	D	D	P	P	D	D	P	P	P	P
Promotional materials	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Discount from entry fee (eg. for children)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Castle as a part of the DMO product	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Castle as a part of the travel agency (tour operator) product	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	x	●	●		
Own website			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
		Link to Facebook	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	x	●	●
		Link to Instagram	●	●	●	x	●	●	x	x	●	x
		Link to YouTube	●	●	●	x	●	●	x	x	●	●
Providing exposures for research	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D		
●	Available/accessible											
x	Not available/accessible											
P	Partially accessible / occasionally accessible											
D	Only after agreement with the management of the museum											

Note: own elaboration.

Slovak castles and chateaus are part of the offer of several travel agencies as part of a one-day trip to the destination (e.g. to the town of Bratislava, region Spiš or Orava). Typically, the product only includes transport to the destination and interpretation, the entrance fees must be paid separately. None of the examined castles is part of the product of the local destination management organization (DMO)¹. The information about castles (location, history, excursions, opening hours etc) are available at the websites of several DMO (f. e. Spiš Castle).

¹ There are currently 36 local destination management organizations and 5 regional.

Castles have their own websites, but some do not meet current requirements (inaccurate information, missing events, unattractive visuals, missing or not working language mutations and links to social networks and visitors could not express their opinion or write a review).

The analyses of visitors' satisfaction with services is possible through a primary survey or reviews on various Internet portals. The satisfaction of visitors with the services of the castles have been examined based on the references on the travel portal tripadvisor.com[23]. The satisfaction rating is expressed on the scale 1 to 5 and evaluated by the arithmetic mean, with 1 representing the lowest satisfaction and 5 highest satisfaction with the services. Nearly two-thirds of visitors (60%) are very satisfied with the services of selected castles and chateaus in Slovakia (table 4).

Table 4

Satisfaction with castle and manor-houses services

Castle (Manor-House/ Evaluation	Number of reviews (June 2018)	Evaluation(%)					Final evalua- tion
		1	2	3	4	5	
Spiš Castle	456	1	1	4	26	68	4.5
Orava Castle	360	1	3	3	24	69	4.5
Devín Castle	2,095	1	1	10	37	51	4.5
Trenčín Castle	318	1	1	13	38	47	4.0
Bojnice Chateau	400	2	2	5	24	67	4.5
Stará Lubovňa Castle	146	0	1	5	26	68	4.5
Strečno Castle	64	1	1	6	34	58	4.5
Bratislava Castle	4,052	1	4	22	42	31	4.0
Betliar Chateau	37	0	2	5	16	77	4.5
Červený Kameň Castle	114	1	3	1	37	58	4.5
Average	804	1	2	7	30	60	4.4

Note: source [23].

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to evaluate the role of castles and manor-houses as a cultural attraction in Slovak tourism.

Almost a quarter of the inhabitants of the EU and Slovakia consider cultural as the main motive for going on a holiday. One of the most important cultural attractions are museums, which have almost 4.85 million visitors annually (Slovakia has 5.45 million inhabitants). Many of the museums are located on 41 accessible castles and manor-houses (chateaus).

Castle tours can not only focus on the history of the object and its past, but also on everyday life in the castle, events and related active experience. Visitors want life and emotional experiences. Therefore, it is essential to enrich the elements of everyday life in an entertaining way.

The number of visitors in castles is influenced also by other attractions in destination and events as well. The majority of castles and chateaus offer only traditional services without active-animation programs. These castles and chateaus have their own website, and several offers an audio-visual guide as well as a virtual tour.

Several castles and chateaus cooperate with service intermediaries (travel agencies), but none cooperate with destination management organizations to create comprehensive tourism products in the region.

Further effective development of cultural tourism in Slovakia could not be without innovation in the offer and the creation regional tourism products for visitors, the use of information and communication technologies and the cooperation of museums and travel agents.

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