

Review

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THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN PROMOTING THE ATTRACTIONS OF DARK TOURISM AS A SELECTIVE FORM OF TOURISM

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Abstract: The main hypothesis of this paper is that the act of execution of noble fighters and people during the Slaughter of the Knezes, which took place in the former Sanjak of Smederevo in 1804, poses great potential for the development of dark tourism with the key role played by the media. The theoretical framework is based on the works of authors Malcolm Foley and John Lennon (1996) for places associated with suffering and death, as well as those of Stephanie Marie Yuill (2003) for their educational function in the development of dark tourism. On the other hand, the media may influence the decision making process regarding tourist destination selections through the agenda-setting theory. The proposed solution is that the Tourism Organisation Valjevo should, as a new source of news, assert itself to the media by strategically approaching the communication segment. This tourist attraction would become more noticeable in this way and the media would generate income and make up for the departure of advertisers to the advantage of both sides.

Keywords: dark tourism, the Slaughter of the Knezes, agenda setting, media advertising

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Introduction

There is no unique and universal definition of the term *tourism*. Although there is a multitude of them, no definition is all-encompassing as they can be classified by the specificity of the term into scientific and touristic ones, scientific and economic ones, economic and organizational ones, geographic ones etc. (Tomić & Hrabovsky, 2008). On the other hand, Christopher Holloway (2006) states that tourism is transport, accommodation and attractions which include leisure time. However, there are other authors in the field (Smith, 1998) claiming that tourism is the sum of all activities that directly provide goods and services during one's stay at any given location. Yet, tourism in its core, at least as an economic phenomenon, is a combination of economic and non-economic entities more or less related through the social division of labor which aims for creating an organized supply of all products and services that are necessary for tourists temporarily being away from their permanent residence (Tomić & Hrabovsky, 2008).

Valjevo is yet another town having potential in this regard because of both natural resources and cultural and historical monuments, churches and monasteries, which show good potential for tourism development in their own right (Selenić, 2021). The earliest written record dates back to 1393 (Krivošejev, 2012) and it would appear that the peaceful streets of today keep the secrets of freedom fighting. Moreover, since traveling is realized according to one's motivation (wish) for both existing and new interests, it's safe to talk about selective forms of tourism (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001). One of them is black-spot tourism, also known as morbid tourism, grief tourism, dark tourism and horror tourism for being related to death, misfortune, war and genocide (Rabotić, 2013). The main hypothesis of this paper is that the act of execution of noble Serbian fighters and people during the Slaughter of the Knezes (Nenadović, 1980), owing to the preserved Konak of Müsellim (Serbian: Muselimov konak) where the fighters were held captive and on the roof of which their impaled heads were placed, along with the memorial, poses great potential for the development of dark tourism with the lead role played by the media. It is for this reason that this paper deals with the matter of the media and tourism, i.e. with how to bring advantage to the both sides of this relationship. The criterion upon which the selection of the tourist attraction is founded includes the historical context since the execution, which took place in the area stretching from the White Bridge on the Kolubara to Valjevo Gymnasium, hastened the First Serbian Uprising (Joksimović, 1984).

1.1. The Historical Context

The Slaughter of the Knezes was an event that took place on February 4, 1804 in the Sanjak of Smederevo, informally also known as the Pashalik of Belgrade, in today's Valjevo, when the Dahijas carried out the execution of more than 70 noble fighters and people, the best known among which were Ilija Birčanin and Aleksa Nenadović (Nenadović, 1980). The event was a direct cause of the outbreak of the First Serbian Uprising and the beginning of the formation of the modern era Serbia. Prior to the events, 12 knezes of the Valjevo nahiya met at the beginning of 1803 and decided that an uprising should be staged in roughly eight months. During this period, a letter to Major Mitešer, the commander in Zemun, was written stating, among other things, that the Dahijas were in dispute with each other, namely Aganlija and Kučuk-Alija and that an armed conflict was possible. It went down in history, especially from today's perspective, that the letter came into the Dahijas' possession whereupon the executions were carried out in the form of apparent retribution.

2. The Research

This paper is based on a master's thesis (Selenić, 2021) whose research subject is the communication aspect (the role of the media) in the coverage of the Valjevo region tourist attractions in the local media. The research encompasses the period from January 1, 2015 to January 1, 2020 and includes 13 media outlets selected according to their promptness and impact:

- the *Napred* weekly
- the Marš TV channel
- the Vujić TV channel
- the Va Plus TV channel
- *Kolubarske.rs*
- *Vamedia.info*
- *Ugradu.info*
- *Valjevskaposla.info*
- *Patak.co.rs*
- *Valjevskaiskra.rs*
- *Valjevonadlanu.rs*
- *Kolubarski.info* and
- *Mojsvetsporta.net*

The process of writing this paper included the following scientific research methods:

- *the descriptive content analysis method as a method of simple description or interpreting facts, processes and subjects of nature and society*
- *the observational method as an archetypal scientific research method*
- *the interview method as a traditional approach to the exchange of information*
- *the document analysis method laying particular emphasis on website analysis as a systematic procedure of browsing, examining and evaluating documents — printed or electronic material which requires its data to be examined and interpreted for the sake of understanding and empirical evidence*
- *the historical research method as a method based on archival data, secondary sources, consulting historical records and memories*

2.1. The Research Results

Newspapers

The issues of the *Napred* newspaper that were taken into consideration during the research process were those published in the period from January 1, 2015 to January 1, 2020. The total number of issues examined is 259. The weekly partially dealt with tourism and topics that can be classified as business tourism like various fairs, conferences, exhibitions, book promotions and similar events mainly hosted on the territory of Valjevo or one of the surrounding municipalities such as Osečina, Ub, Mionica, Lajkovac or Ljig.

What stood out from the other attractions in the reports was the traditional event Tešnjar Evenings (Serbian: Tešnjarske večeri). For instance, the report on this event took up as many as four pages in the newspaper, i.e. it was one of the main topics of August 2015. Other events were followed as well depending on the attraction they held and how the editors opted to report on them. Thus, some newspaper space was devoted to the reports on the SPREG Trade Fair, Jazz Festival, Valjevo Film Meetings, CACIB Dog Show, Tobacco Cracklings Festival (Serbian: Festival duvan čvaraka) and Osečina Plum Days.

Sports and recreational tourism was followed superbly. Every issue included up to two pages devoted to sport. Special attention was paid not to overlook any type of sport. Sports covered varied from football, futsal, basketball, volleyball, boxing, wrestling, karate, karumu, table tennis, handball, cycling, shooting sports, athletics, swimming and water polo to mountain climbing and sky-running, which average readers are unlikely to find any interest in. It should be noted that the *Napred* is published once a week and it is necessary to make a selection of results in competitions between two issues.

A special section within the sports pages was devoted to short (flash) articles. The sports guide was also interesting and it provided information on the time and place of various clubs' matches. Despite flaws, minor reporting mistakes above all, the *Napred* deserves a high grade for its coverage of sports and recreational tourism. Several events are the icing on the cake, the most popular among which being the New Year's Futsal Tournament, Memorial in Honor of General Đukić, St. Sava Race, Summer 3x3 Basketball League.

The coverage of other forms of tourism was limited, though some of it was provided to a certain extent in the period from 2015 to 2020 but not as much as that of sports and recreational tourism.

The graphically shaped Fount of Faith (Serbian: Istočnik vere) cannot be considered the promotion of religious tourism although being closely limited to religion. The section devoted to agriculture and villages provided important information but cannot be considered rural tourism coverage. What is praiseworthy is cultural life coverage through aforementioned exhibitions and literary evenings, e.g. book promotions.

Television

Feature stories broadcast on television can be considered the promotion of tourism. The events that were broadcast the most were the Tešnar Evenings, Tobacco Cracklings Festival, Jazz Festival etc. What makes the difference is that some media outlets' coverage was wider than that of others. For example, Vujić broadcast live TV shows and interviews with the participants (artists) that performed during one of the Tešnar Evenings.

Live broadcasts were mostly given by Vujić (basketball, football, Youth Basketball Tournament, New Year's Futsal Tournament) and RTV Marš, which tur-

ned its attention to water polo coverage. Similarly to the *Napred*, viewers could enjoy the previews and reports of the Summer 3x3 Basketball League, St. Sava Race, New Year's Futsal Tournament, Memorial in Honor of General Đukić, Nikola 'Gužva' Jevremović Memorial and championship matches. In addition, TV features were regularly run, even TV shows sometimes, on which members of sports clubs appeared as guests.

Websites

Researching websites was an extensive process inasmuch as it comprised of researching the largest number of media outlets, all of which are included in a single research result. Apart from the methodological procedures mentioned in Chapter 2, the standard method of searching websites was also adopted, using keywords which mostly included the names of festivals, famous landmarks or terms related to tourism.

The research suggests that websites covered the events taking place in both Valjevo and its surroundings. The Tobacco Cracklings Festival, Tešnar Evenings, Jazz Festival, Valjevo Film Meetings, SPREG Trade Fair, Fungus Days, Wild Garlic Days and Kolubara Wine Fair to name but a few of the most notable tourist attractions. The final decision regarding the reporting on such events was made by the editors. It is perfectly understandable that not everyone adopted the same criteria while making decisions, e.g. the coverage of tourism on Valjevskaiskra.rs was very limited (other than, partially, sports).

Not everyone's reasoning was like this and therefore Valjevskaposla.info saw the obvious potential and published a series of four articles. The titles "We Travel Everywhere but Fail to See the Paradise Around Us" and "Are We Aware of the Nature Around Us?" perfectly describe what many people miss in the beautiful Serbia. The articles (in fact) look at jaunts that showcase fortunes through the landmarks of Valjevo.

It should be noted that there was a very limited number of articles on rural, religious and health tourism. However, the research confirmed that, for instance, Vamedia.info published articles on a handful of major anniversaries and religious holidays of significance to believers in Valjevo and the surrounding area, traditional Moba and in a way expressed interest in these forms of tourism.

However, there didn't seem to be enough of coverage of this sort and that the media mainly focused on organized events.

Sport was occasionally followed — every now and then rather than daily. It seems that such epilogue stems from sport not being their primary focus of interest. The sole exception is Mojsvetsporta.net which is dealt with in more detail in the next paragraph of this paper. Kolubarske.rs reported on sports events perfectly. However, none of the existing flaws prevented Youth Basketball Tournament, Memorial in Honor of General Đukić, St. Sava Race, Race Up the Gradac River, ABA League and tournaments of numerous clubs from being reported on.

Mojsvetsporta.net (hereinafter referred to as 'the portal') should be singled out because it specializes in sport as opposed to the other websites, which follow political and cultural life alike. Editor Dragan Ilić, a former correspondent for the Sportski žurnal and Radio Valjevo journalist, regularly published articles on sports events, league matches and sometimes topics not strictly related to sport.

The portal meets the criteria of the comprehensive coverage of sports and recreational tourism along with an endeavor to report on different forms of tourism regardless of popularity, gender or any other criteria, which is proved by the portal's categories. What was particularly promoted was successful sportspeople coming from Valjevo like basketball players Miloš Teodosić and Vladimir Đokić and football player Matija Nastasić, whose picture is on the home page of the portal. The same goes for the logos of Krušik and Valjevo Brewery (Serbian: Valjevska pivara), famous brands of the town on the Kolubara, particularly well-known among older generations.

3. The Theoretical Framework

The previous section, therefore, shows that historical anniversaries were hardly commemorated at all. Among them is one related to the Slaughter of the Knezes despite having touristic potential for the development of dark tourism, which is described in Chapter 1.

The theoretical foundation lies in the works of authors Malcolm Foley and John Lennon (1996) and it is for this reason that a tragic event like the Slaughter of the Knezes is classified as one taking place on a scaffold or in an area having dun-

geons with cells. Of course, we should bear in mind that not everyone travels to tourist destinations out of enjoyment. Instead, their motivation behind visiting lesser-known destinations may be researching local cultures and customs (Gavrilović, 2020:59). On the other hand, depending on supply and demand, there is a wide spectrum of tourist needs ranging from vacation, leisure, getting to know gastronomy and consuming unique hotel accommodations to tours of various destinations because of attractive transportation (Gržinić, 2019).

It is for this reason that the part of Valjevo where the Slaughter of the Knezes took place may serve as a place to discover and explore a historical event in greater detail, in which death and suffering played a vital role. Analyzing dark tourism, the educational aspect of it is singled out as the strongest motive in this regard purely because of making it an educational experience for tourists (Niemelä, 2010). But in what way? To begin with, *educational* refers to the development of physical, intellectual and moral capabilities, which include education and growing up. If there is potential in the role of education to begin with, what is of exceptional importance in it is national identity, i.e. a sense of belonging to a certain culture, mostly because of the historical context ascribed to the Slaughter of the Knezes (Yuill). However, to classify an area as a place of human suffering, certain criteria must be met first. They are related to executions being characterized by helplessness and vulnerability, as being mass because of emotional compassion, but it would also require the original event to be easily noticeable along with having credible documentation on it (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996).

4. The Role of the Media

But in what way does the media play its role? Foley and Lennon (1996) suggest that dark tourism is the product of the media, i.e. that the role of the media is to encourage and help develop professions related to this form of selective tourism. Walter (2009) also points out the importance of the relationship between the media and tourism, which is basically described as a form of business, suggesting that the media can commercialize death. It is exemplified in the tragic deaths of celebrities and, as a result, tourists visit their resting places or death scenes. In this way, tourists, although having nothing in common with the celebrity, are able to achieve a mental catharsis or find satisfaction because of having an opportunity to express some sort of grief (Bloom, 2008).

So, it has been confirmed that the role of the media is vital with regards to the promotion of what tourism has to offer, referring not only to sports tourism but to tourism in general, while, of course, the internet does mean a revolution in following sporting events (Gavrilović, 2020:57). It is also noteworthy that the media has seen an enormous increase in the importance of the role they play, thus becoming one of the most powerful forces of contemporary society meaning it can promote certain cultural elements in the form of lifestyles or world-views (Perić, Krasulja & Radojević, 2011). That it should be in the focus of the Tourism Organisation Valjevo is exemplified in the claims that it can influence public opinion on events, people or tourist destinations by providing information (Schiler, 1971). The main idea is to suggest new points of interest by making a certain amount of valuable information available. The key element is, in fact, the agenda-setting theory which implies that some information is particularly valued by the media over a certain period of time (Zhang, 2018 & McCombs, 2020). That is because the goal indeed is to achieve mutual influence between the media and the public.

Of course, there are different forms of the media influencing the public (Penezić, 2021). What is crucial for this paper is the impact of James Potter (2011), which can be clarified with changes in people's viewpoints and behavior, among other things. It is crucial to lay emphasis on the importance of the media one more time inasmuch as practically every piece of information exchanged between the sender and recipient conveys a message (McLuhan, 1994), especially if it is of educational value regarding a national legacy (Bertrand, 2018). It leads to the conclusion that the media is the principal method that the Tourism Organisation Valjevo employs to make announcements. In fact, the Tourism Organisation Valjevo is one of the strongest links between the touristic potential of Valjevo and its promotion. The complexity of this organization is exemplified in their coordination of activities and cooperation between business entities and other entities related to tourism that have a direct or indirect impact on the improvement and promotion of tourism as well as on the procurement of informative and propagandist material used for the promotion of the touristic value of Valjevo (Selenić, 2021:10).

The media should be viewed as a key element in the process of potential tourists' forming of opinions on and expectations of certain destinations, especially because they pick locations based on what they have heard, seen or read (Ene-muo & Amaechi, 2015, Penezić 2021, Penezić 2012). The aforementioned leads

to the conclusion that the media is an important go-between in choosing destinations (Jalilvand, 2017). In this way, the information which is initially disseminated as secondary, becomes primary regardless of whether there is a way to confirm its accuracy or not.

5. The Proposed Solution

How much room is there for cooperation between the media and tourism? The departure of advertisers came as a serious blow to both the local and national media long ago. But now, possibilities are opening up to the advantage of both sides. The solution in question relates to new sources of news — the PR sector (Currah, 2009 & Petrović, 2014). However, the Tourism Organisation Valjevo must adopt a strategic approach to the communication segment of tourism, i.e. use the media to get their message across (Sommerfeldt & Yang, 2018). The proposed solution implies the combination of video material, photographs, graphs and texts with a view to singling out one tourist offer from the others. Tourism Organisation Valjevo would thus assert itself to the media with topics on the promotion of the Slaughter of the Knezes as a form of tourist attraction and the media would go through the business process of advertising and earn income. In addition, clashes with the main postulates of journalism would be avoided, although research projects conducted by Serbian authors (Petrović, 2017) suggest that as much as 60 to 75 percent of the content is clear (or disguised) PR, and income would finally be generated. In this case, the media outlets, at least according to the classification by We Mei and Zhao Ying (2017), would be chosen based on their promptness and impact as stated in research projects carried out by relevant companies and become paid by the Tourism Organisation Valjevo. On the other hand, they would be obliged to issue announcements via TV advertisements, radio features, advertisements in the print media, social media banners (or the internet in general). Finally, attracting attention, using the agenda-setting theory, is the key element since the main focus of this paper is to suggest that tourism can be a product of the media.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this paper is to suggest that the media can play the key role in the promotion of tourist attractions. The research conducted for the purpose of writing the aforementioned master's thesis (Selenić, 2021), the results of which are presented in Chapter 2, implies that there indeed is touristic potential for the development of dark tourism which dates back to the distant past or, to be precise, to the Slaughter of the Knezes, which took place in 1804 in Valjevo.

The most credible resources can be found in the preserved building of the Konak of Müsellim where the noble fighters were held captive and in the memorial at the place where the executions were carried out. This paper focuses on theoretical approaches invaluable to the development of dark tourism, especially to the Slaughter of the Knezes and explains the role of the media in the whole process. One of the aims relates not just to pointing out the existence of potential but also to contribute by proposing a solution — by way of making use of this potential. Namely, the solution implies that the Tourism Organisation Valjevo, as a new source of news, should assert itself to the media by strategically approaching the communication segment. This tourist attraction would thus become more noticeable and the media would manage to generate income and make up for the departure of advertisers to the advantage of both sides.

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