

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ „ГОЦЕ ДЕЛЧЕВ“ - ШТИП



2021

ГОДИШЕН ЗБОРНИК НА
ФАКУЛТЕТ ЗА ТУРИЗАМ И
БИЗНИС ЛОГИСТИКА

YEARBOOK OF FACULTY OF
TOURISM AND BUSINESS
LOGISTICS

ГОДИНА 1

VOLUME I

GOCE DELCEV UNIVERSITY - STIP

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OTTOMAN HERITAGE: SPECIFIC PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS FROM NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract

All physical and intangible culture that has been left in the regions where the Ottoman Empire used to be widespread is referred to as Ottoman Heritage (OH). Today, it is well known as a motive for visiting many destinations, and mostly attracts the cultural type of tourists. The research examines the attitude of 172 students (age 18-28) about cultural legacy from the Ottoman period. The goal is to identify their personal association and specific perception of using OH as a prerequisite for developing tourism cultural route in North Macedonia. By calculating frequency distribution, the analyses revealed students' images on OH cultural assets and the possibilities of improving tourism development by promoting OH cultural route as a unique tailor-made tourist product. Despite limitations that occurred during the research, the findings might be a useful beginning point for developing new strategic approaches for enhancing modest cultural tourism development.

Key words: Legacy; Cultural route; Tourist product; Tourism development; Young adults; Attitude.

1. Introduction

Territories that used to be cultural crossroads, with still visible cultural influences and attributes, have potential for tourism development. Cultural and historical monuments have always attracted tourists. Ottoman Heritage (OH) refers to all tangible and intangible culture that has been left on the territories where the Ottoman Empire used to be widespread. It includes many buildings, art and architecture influences, gastronomy, language influences, customs, etc. OH, nowadays is recognizable both in modern Turkey and outside its borders. For example, on the Balkans, during the period of 500 years of Ottoman occupation, the Ottoman culture has influenced the local cultures and many of these influences are still visible.

Many destinations have developed tourist products based on the OH (e.g., Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Istanbul in Turkey, etc.). On the other hand, some destinations still have not used the complete potential of the OH they possess. Lagos and Ntoumi (2014) concluded that there is an urgent need for the development of cultural tourism on the Chios Island given that it has a unique cultural heritage and numerous great Ottoman monuments that can contribute towards it. Nestoroska et al., (2017) discuss that not all of the sampled OH sites in North Macedonia have an attractive location, but they all possess uniqueness, esthetic, architectural, historic, and educational value. They are all evocative sites related to many legends, myths, and stories, thus been completely suitable to be presented as tourist products and part of a tourist route.

Understanding the cultural heritage leads to authentic interpretation and increased cultural experience along with their preservation and promotion, which is strongly recommended in the International Cultural Tourism Charter (ICOMOS, 2002). But how people perceive the Ottoman heritage? There are not many studies that focus on OH perception. In some Balkan countries several can be found. In general, Šešić and Mijatović (2014) find in Serbia, as well as in other Balkan countries that throughout history used to be part of the Ottoman sphere, the Ottoman material heritage was destroyed to a large extent, as it was also considered the heritage of the "other" – the enemy. Alp (2009) argues the perception of a comprehensive cultural heritage of the Ottoman period (14-20 century) in the Balkans noting it as a common heritage for all nations in the Balkans. Although not equivalent to the buildings in Bursa, Edirne, or Istanbul (Freely, 2011), the variety of remains is an important heritage and attracts many tourists.

Firstly, this paper includes information about data collection process and the methodology used during the research. The main part consists of results which are obtained through frequency analysis, and specific findings that are discussed separately/ Finally, conclusions are made in accordance with the findings.

This paper contributes to the current literature by giving additional information about the perception of OH, specifically among the students from North Macedonia, who could be future tourism development policymakers and could potentially establish the idea of OH cultural route.

2. Data and Methodology

This study is based on quantitative research methods. The research aims to examine the personal association and specific perception of students about cultural legacy from the Ottoman period for developing tourism cultural route in North Macedonia. Between January and February 2021, data was gathered online from

172 students from various universities in North Macedonia aged 18 to 28. Respondents were given a multiple-choice questionnaire to assess the importance of each issue.

The questions that were analyzed using a frequency distribution are listed in Table 1. The answers that were optionally given to respondents as well are given in one of the columns, with no specific sorting. These questions concern the overall perception of the Ottoman legacy in North Macedonia, the types of heritage that students most commonly connect with the Ottoman period, and the probable requirements for the establishment of an OH cultural route in North Macedonia.

Table 1. List of questions

Item	Answer
What is your general association to the Ottoman legacy?	Legacy of terror
	Legacy of Oriental culture
	Legacy of war
	Legacy of specific social order
	Legacy of multicultural/multiethnic identity
What type of heritage do you mostly associate with the Ottoman period?	Architectural Heritage / fortresses, mosques, oriental houses, bridges
	Memorial places / Historic monuments, battlefields, historic figures
	Ethnographic heritage in museums / Costumes, weapons, tools, crafts
	Intangible heritage / Language and literature, stories, legends, music and dance, customs
	Gastronomy
Which of the following prerequisites for the development of a cultural route of the Ottoman heritage are present in your country?	Religion and religious practices
	Availability of appropriate sites of tangible Ottoman heritage
	Availability of appropriate intangible Ottoman heritage
	Opportunities for combining the Ottoman heritage with other cultural and historical resources
	Opportunities for combining the Ottoman heritage with natural landmarks and nature-oriented activities
	Public support for the development of a cultural route based on the Ottoman heritage at the national level
	Public support for the development of a cultural route based on the Ottoman heritage at the local level (in municipalities and settlements with such heritage)
	Interest from the local tourism business
	Interest from local authorities and cultural institutions
	Interest from domestic tourists
Interest from foreign tourists	

3. Results, Findings and Discussion

The personal association to OH is one of the basic questions when we discuss about specific perception of students in North Macedonia. The given options included: legacy of terror, oriental culture, war, specific social order, multicultural/multiethnic identity, or legacy of Islamic religion. According to the analyzed results referring to students' general association to the Ottoman legacy, they indicated that they see OH as Legacy of multicultural/multiethnic identity (76 students) and Legacy of Oriental culture (70 students). These two answers are the most frequent and with small difference in number of students choice. This indicates that although during the Ottoman occupation there were many undesirable actions that had negative influences on people, students do not recognize the OH as legacy of terror or war. This can lead us to a conclusion that the cultural aspect of the heritage is more dominant than the possible "harmful" memories that carries it. As well the multicultural/multiethnic identity brings up the aspect of respecting the differences. North Macedonia is a multiethnic country and perceiving OH as a multicultural/multiethnic identity shows that students esteem it and

correlate OH to specific and built cultural identity with its specific characteristics and differences. The other given options have lower frequency in comparison to the two elaborated above.

Less than a third of the respondents see OH as Legacy of Islamic religion or Legacy of specific social order. One can discuss here that OH is legacy which is not directly related to the Islamic religion, although partly there can be recognized some Islamic influences. Here we can point out some of the religious sites (as mosques, holy places, some customs etc.) Anyway, one can perceive that some OH can be related exclusively to the Islamic religion and architecture and other as a part of the wider Ottoman culture. Referring to the relation of OH to the Legacy of specific social order students again think it is not the most acceptable general association to the Ottoman legacy in North Macedonia.

The last group of general associations refer to the perception of OH as legacy of terror and legacy of war. This is the least frequent group of answers and this should be taken positively as students see more the positive background of the OH, instead of the negative. This can lead further to use the OH for developing OH cultural routes as a unique tailor-made tourist product, instead of ignoring it if it was perceived as beforementioned "harmful" legacy.

Despite the general association of OH, the results indicated the most common association of students regarding the specific type of heritage dating from the Ottoman period. Therefore, the most common association relates to the architectural heritage. This is the most frequent answer given by over 70% of the respondents. This high percentage shows that students are more aware of tangible OH like mosques, oriental houses, bridges and other buildings. This can be understood by realizing that this type of heritage is highly visible to everybody. We can witness examples in several cities/towns in North Macedonia, where whole parts are preserved as they were built or renovated in their authentic form. The architectural heritage was mentioned before as an example of tourist product development potentials. This heritage is also part of tourist supply, so this can be an additional reason for recognizing it as specific association of OH in North Macedonia.

Less than a third of the respondents recognized other specific type of heritage dating from the Ottoman period as a specific association. These less frequent associations, consequently, refer to:

- intangible heritage (language and literature, stories, legends, music and dance, customs);
- memorial places (historic monuments, battlefields, historic figures);
- ethnographic heritage in museums (costumes, weapons, tools, crafts);
- gastronomy;
- religion and religious practices.

Most of the last-mentioned heritage refers to intangible heritage. Hence, students are more likely to recognize tangible than intangible OH.

Less than a half of the respondents chose the intangible heritage as type of heritage students mostly associate with the Ottoman period. Although it has lower frequency than the Architectural heritage, it is the second most frequent answer. This can be explained through the influences that has made the Ottoman Empire to the Macedonian language and literature, as we can still find many Turkish words in the Macedonian language, especially in informal communication and dialects. Stories', legends', novels', books' contents include moments of the Ottoman governance in this region. In this same group of answers, we shall add the memorial places too, since have been chosen as an answer with similar frequency. These are mostly related to historic monuments, battlefields, historic figures. This is followed by the Ethnographic heritage in museums. Probably, this type of OH is not promoted enough and it is rarely presented as important tourist potential in North Macedonia.

However, gastronomy, religion and religious practices are the least frequent answers given about the issue of specific association to OH. Definitely the religion and religious practices are not perceived as association to OH. This confirms the findings that OH is not commonly perceived as Legacy of Islamic religion, as before mentioned.

The results that address the issue of the prerequisites for the development of an OH cultural route in North Macedonia show the following: "students think that the most important prerequisite is the interest from foreign tourists". This is the opinion of the half of the respondents. This is on the side of the demand which means that most of the students expect the drive of a potential cultural route should be the interest. According to this, the tourist supply in future can focus on attracting foreign tourist by offering tailor-made OH cultural routes in North Macedonia.

As a prerequisite with less frequency are the opportunities for combining the Ottoman heritage with other cultural and historical resources. This is as well an important option for future tourist products development including OH, but adding value with other resources. It can be assumed positively the fact that students see the opportunity of combination of heritage in order to develop and improve tourist products that can meet the tourist needs and provide them exceptional experiences. In this group of prerequisites students identified the interest from local tourism businesses to include this heritage in their products, which is extension to the supply issue mentioned above. The availability of appropriate sites of tangible Ottoman heritage is as well

a prerequisite recognized by students. This relates to the association of specific types of heritage from the Ottoman period which as we found out that students are more aware of it in comparison to the intangible OH. Therefore, its availability is expected to be seen as an important prerequisite for cultural route development in North Macedonia. Lesser answers refer to the interest from domestic tourists, meaning that students perceive a direct link for relating the cultural route as an international tourist product.

In the last group of answers the frequency is less than quarter of total respondents' answers. This category comprises of the opportunities for combining the OH with natural landmarks and nature-oriented activities. This means that natural landmarks and nature-oriented activities, cannot be combined as good as cultural and historical resources in order to create a cultural route. Probably, the students do not see some logical connections between OH cultural and natural resources, as they see in OH with other cultural resources as they are from the same category of tourist attractions. In this group we can add the Interest from local authorities and cultural institutions as well the public support for the development of a cultural route based on the Ottoman heritage at the national and local level. Students do not find the public bodies an important stakeholder in the development of a cultural route of the Ottoman heritage. Anyway, the public entities have a great impact in tourism development, so this opinion of the students should be analyzed further.

Since students in North Macedonia do not recognize the intangible OH as a common type of specific heritage it is not neither perceived as an important prerequisite for OH cultural route development.

4. Concluding remarks

By calculating frequency distribution, the research identified students' images on OH cultural assets in North Macedonia. The findings revealed possibilities of improving tourism development by promoting OH cultural route as a unique tailor-made tourist product in the country.

Students have a positive association of Ottoman heritage and that shall go in favor to future tourist product development including OH as a part of cultural route. Overcoming the perception of harmful, war or occupational legacy means that the youth, i.e., students see more the cultural side and value of OH. Students are more likely to relate the OH to tangible example than intangible. The possible reason for this is that maybe the tangible culture is more visible and promoted in comparison with the other, and definitely more popular among the students. Anyway, the intangible culture, as well has it tourism potential, although less students recognized it. The less recognizable type of heritage related to Ottoman period turned out to be gastronomy and religion and religious practices. For developing a cultural route including OH students think that the most important prerequisite is the interest from foreign tourists. That should be correct, but anyway the supply needs to work hard in order to create the tourist product, place it and promote it appropriately in order to attract foreign tourists' interest. Putting emphasis on other prerequisites too shall bring better results than focusing only on one.

The research was limited with small sample size, exploration of only students' perception, and a limited set of investigated indicators, which might be addressed in some future work. Nevertheless, the findings might be a good starting point for coming up with new strategic approaches for boosting modest cultural tourism growth in North Macedonia.

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