



# PROMOTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTIES ON FACEBOOK BY THE NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION OF SERBIA

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## Abstract:

Cultural properties represent the core of tourism destination supply and culture of the local population. Visiting tangible cultural properties and getting to know intangible ones is an indispensable part of every trip, even for those tourists who are not interested in cultural tourism. Creating a strong relationship between tourism and culture can help tourism destinations become more attractive and improve their competitive position. The aim of this paper is to explore the presence of cultural properties in the promotional activities of the National Tourism Organization of Serbia. As social media, especially Facebook, are used to a large extent for promotion in the field of tourism, this paper presents a survey on the degree the National Tourism Organization of Serbia uses Facebook in order to promote the cultural properties of the Republic of Serbia. In order to achieve the results, all posts published by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia on their Facebook pages in Serbian and English during a period of one year were analysed. The data collected were analysed using the statistical analysis software SPSS, version 23.

## Keywords:

cultural tourism, cultural heritage, UNESCO world heritage, cultural monuments, social media promotion

## INTRODUCTION

Every day millions of tourists come into contact with different natural, cultural, architectural and historical treasures of the tourism destination they visit. One of the prevalent forms of tourism and one of the oldest ones is tourism based on cultural heritage sites (Timothy, 2017). The quest for art, culture and the roots of Western civilization dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, so cultural tourism can be considered the primary form of tourism (Richards, 2016). Cultural tourism encompasses cultural activities and experiences that are very attractive to tourists and enrich their journeys (Croes & Semrad, 2015). Cultural heritage appears to be an important generator of tourists' interest, adding value to destinations by stimulating local socio-economic development (Pratt & Peter, 2014). Creating a strong relationship between tourism and culture can help destinations become more attractive to tourists, as well as increase their competitiveness as locations to live, visit, work and invest in (OECD, 2009).

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There is a general perception that cultural tourism is a form of tourism with more pros than cons. Cultural tourists spend a lot of money during their trip and cause little damage to the environment and local culture, while at the same time they contribute to the economy and support culture (Richards, 2016). On the other hand, there is a belief that cultural tourism can do more harm than good, enabling tourists to penetrate sensitive cultural environments and thus jeopardize exactly what makes these cultural environments attractive (Aas, Ladkinn & Fletcher, 2005). Development of local and regional culture, strengthening tradition and low impact of seasonality can be highlighted as the positive sides of cultural tourism, while commercialization of culture and environmental degradation are emphasized as the negative ones (Csapo, 2012). Nevertheless, despite these negative sides, the number of tourists participating in cultural tourism is growing every day. Although it is difficult to know exactly how many cultural tourists there are, the World Tourism Organization estimates that around 40% of international arrivals are considered to be cultural arrivals (UNWTO, 2018). In addition, the number of cultural tourists is continually increasing compared to the total number of international arrivals.

Tourism related literature often calls attention to the fact that there is no universally accepted definition of cultural tourism (Richards, 2016; Allen, et al., 2015; Croes & Semrad, 2015; McKercher, 2002). The reason for this lies in the fact that the very notion of culture is so complex that there are a number of different definitions. However, what numerous authors agree on by citing McKercher's model of cultural tourists (2002) is the fact that all the tourists, willingly or not, come into contact with the culture of the destination they visit (Smith, 2015; Stylianou-Lambert, 2011; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; González & Molina, 2007). This model classifies cultural tourists into five groups depending on the importance of cultural tourism in the process of choosing a destination, as well as on the depth of the experience sought in contact with the culture of the chosen destination. According to this model, all five groups of tourists, including those who are not interested in cultural tourism activities at all, must come into contact with the cultural properties of a destination. For this reason, investing in cultural properties, integrating them into the tourism offer of a destination and promoting them adequately can significantly improve the competitive position of a tourism destination (Russo & Van Der Borg, 2002).

It is impossible to research cultural tourism and cultural heritage without mentioning The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). According to this organization, cultural heritage includes tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, natural heritage and heritage in the event of armed conflict (UNESCO, 2017a). This organization adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972 which states that cultural heritage refers to monuments, groups of buildings and sites of historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological value (UNESCO, 1972). In addition, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 (UNESCO, 2003) and in 1992 it established the Memory of the World programme in order to preserve the worldwide documentary heritage of universal value. There are five cultural heritage sites from Serbia on the World Heritage List: Stari Ras and Sopoćani, Studenica Monastery, Medieval monuments in Kosovo, Gamzigrad - Romuliana, Palace of Galerius and stećci - Medieval Tombstone Graveyards (UNESCO, 2018a). The List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage includes slava and kolo (UNESCO, 2018b), while the Memory of the World programme includes Nikola Tesla's Archive, Miroslav Gospel - Manuscript from 1180 and Telegram of Austria-Hungary's declaration of war on Serbia on 28th July 1914 (UNESCO, 2017b).

According to the Cultural Property Law of the Republic of Serbia (2011), cultural properties are objects and products of material and spiritual culture of general interest. Depending on their importance, cultural properties are classified into cultural properties, cultural properties of great importance and cultural properties of exceptional importance, while according to their physical features they are classified into movable and immobile cultural properties.

Promotion of cultural tourism is a very important step in the process of supporting the development of tourism and improving the competitive position of the tourism destination (Croes & Semrad, 2015). The growing popularity of the Internet has completely changed the way people access information (Buhalis & Law, 2008), so the Internet has become the most important source of information and thus one of the most important media used for promotion (Xiang, Magnini & Fesenmaier, 2015; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). By using social media, modern tourists have access to a wide range of information about their future trip, which helps them make the right decisions while choosing destinations, accommodations, restaurants, excursions and attractions (Hays, Page & Buhalis, 2013), therefore it is no surprise that social media are widely used for



promotion in the field of tourism. For this reason, this paper presents a survey on the degree of use of Facebook, the social network with the largest number of active users in the world (Facebook, 2018), by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia in order to promote the cultural properties of the Republic of Serbia.

## Research methodology

The main focus of this research is the analysis of content of Facebook pages of the National Tourism Organization of Serbia. Quantitative research was selected as the primary method of research aimed at classification, measurement and analysis of promotional messages sent by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia to their target market through their pages on Facebook. The content analysis was selected as the most favorable method of research because it allows for the use of a series of procedures that enable drawing conclusions based on the sample (Weber, 1990). The survey covers all posts by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia on their Facebook pages in Serbian and English during the period from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2017. All the data collected were analyzed using the statistical analysis software SPSS, version 23.

## RESULTS

During the period researched, the National Tourism Organization of Serbia posted 234 times on their page in Serbian, on average 0.64 per day, while on their page in English there were 197 posts, that is 0.54 per day. As the subject of this study is the promotion of cultural properties, the frequency of promotion of tourism attractions was analyzed first. The National Tourism Organization of Serbia promoted attractions in 44.4% of their posts in Serbian, while the page in English promoted a tourism attraction in 45.7% of cases. A little over half of the promoted attractions on the page in Serbian, 52.9% to be exact, were cultural properties. The percentage is slightly higher on the page in English, that is, 61.1% of all promoted attractions were cultural properties.

Within 234 posts on the page in Serbian, the National Tourism Organization of Serbia promoted 314 different attractions, while in 197 posts on the page in English there were 129 different attractions. Regarding cultural properties, the National Tourism Organization of Serbia promoted 148 cultural properties on the page in Serbian, while they promoted 45 different cultural properties on the page in English. When it comes to the physical features of cultural properties, on the page in Serbian there were 85.9% of immovable cultural properties promoted, while 19.8% of them were movable. All posts promoting museums, which are institutions of protection of movable cultural properties, were classified as those that promote movable cultural properties. However, in a number of cases, the buildings of the promoted museums are on the list of immovable cultural properties, so those posts were categorized as those that promote both movable and immovable cultural properties. On the page in English, 95.4% of all promoted cultural properties were immovable, while 16.2% of them were mobile. Table 1 shows the frequency of promotion of subcategories of immovable cultural properties. As for the subcategories of movable cultural properties, works of art and history were promoted in 94.7% of cases of promotion of movable cultural properties on the page in Serbian and in 90.5% of cases on the page in English, while archival material was promoted in other cases. Film material and old and rare books were not promoted in any post. When it comes to the importance of promoted cultural properties, Fig. 1 presents these results.

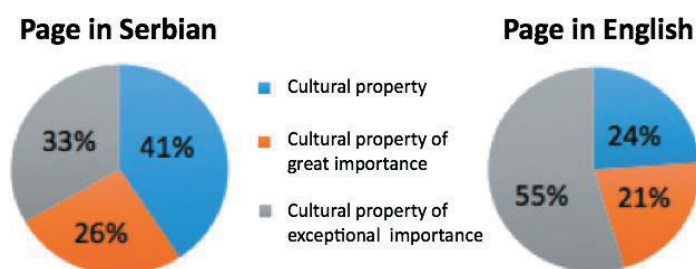
Table 1. Frequency and percentage of promotion of subcategories of immovable cultural properties

		Page in Serbian		Page in English	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Cultural monuments	122	73.9	93	75.0
	Spatial cultural-historical units	17	10.3	22	17.7
	Archeological sites	15	9.1	8	6.5
	Historic landmarks	11	6.7	1	.8
	Total	165	100.0	124	100.0

Source: Author



Figure 1. Importance of promoted cultural properties



Source: Author

## DISCUSSION

By analyzing the results obtained by the research, certain conclusions can be drawn. First of all, it is important to emphasize that a large number of posts by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia on both their pages on Facebook were dedicated to the promotion of tourism attractions. On the other hand, if we look closely at how often cultural properties were promoted, we can notice a significantly smaller percentage. Thus, 23.5% of all posts on the page in Serbian were dedicated to the promotion of cultural properties, while 27.9% of the posts on the page in English were dedicated to cultural properties. The survey also included tourism destinations the promoted cultural properties are from. It was established that on the page in Serbian the cultural properties promoted were from as many as 97 different destinations in Serbia, with no destination standing out. However, the page in English is quite different. Cultural properties from only 19 different destinations were promoted, but almost two thirds of them were from Belgrade. Table 2 presents these results. Therefore, it can be concluded that the National Tourism Organization of Serbia promotes cultural properties from all over the country to domestic tourists, thus trying to further develop domestic tourism, while it can be assumed that Belgrade as the capital is the most attractive for foreign tourists, hence a significantly larger number of promoted cultural properties from this city.

Table 2. tourism destinations most frequently promoted cultural properties are from

Page in Serbian			Page in English		
Tourism destination	Frequency	Percentage	Tourism destination	Frequency	Percentage
Niš	28	7.1	Belgrade	84	64.6
Belgrade	16	4.0	Niš	9	6.9
Vršac	16	4.0	Zlatibor	6	4.6

Source: Author

The most frequently promoted movable cultural property on the page in Serbian was the National Museum in Niš, which is at the same time immovable cultural property being a cultural monument. Regarding immovable cultural properties on the page in Serbian, not one stands out, but there were 10 cultural properties promoted equally, 3 times each for a period of one year. There were 7 cultural properties from Niš, a city with most frequently promoted cultural properties, as well as Kalemegdan, Smederevo Fortress and Lepenski Vir. When it comes to movable cultural properties on the page in English, the Nikola Tesla Museum in Belgrade stands out being promoted in 60% of cases of promotion of movable cultural properties. Immovable cultural properties mostly promoted were Kalemegdan, Petrovaradin Fortress and Skadarlija in 11.4%, 9.6% and 7.9% of cases respectively.

In addition to all the above criteria for categorizing posts by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia, the frequency of promotion of cultural properties on the UNESCO lists was also analyzed. Although UNESCO lists include five tangible cultural heritage properties, two intangible cultural heritage properties and



three documentary heritage properties, only eight posts, that is, 3.4% of them on the page in Serbian were dedicated to those cultural properties during the period of one year. Tangible cultural heritage was promoted in five posts, out of which three posts were dedicated to Stari Ras and Sopoćani and one post was dedicated to Gamzigrad and Studenica each. When it comes to the intangible cultural heritage, kolo was registered on the UNESCO list during the researched period, so the National Tourism Organization of Serbia reported about it once. Regarding cultural properties in the Memory of the World programme, only two posts promoted the Nikola Tesla's Archive, located in the Museum of Nikola Tesla in Belgrade. On the page in English, a total of seventeen posts, that is, 8.6% of them were dedicated to cultural properties from the UNESCO lists, out of which four posts promoted tangible cultural heritage properties, two of them Studenica, and one Gamzigrad and Stari Ras and Sopoćani each, one post promoted kolo as the intangible cultural heritage property, while twelve posts promoted Nikola Tesla's Archive from the Memory of the World programme. Therefore, although these cultural properties are on the lists of the most important international organization for the protection of cultural heritage and can be considered the cultural properties of the highest importance in Serbia, an extremely low number of posts were used for their promotion. In addition, it is important to stress that not one post emphasized that these cultural properties are on the UNESCO lists, except for the news about the registration of kolo on the list of intangible cultural heritage.

## CONCLUSION

Cultural heritage, whether tangible such as cultural monuments, historic landmarks and archaeological sites, or intangible such as the cultural environment and atmosphere of the tourism destination, is a major driver of tourism. The data from a number of countries point out the important role played by tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the process of selecting a destination (Throsby, 2016). The cultural tourism supply is extremely versatile, so this form of tourism is one of the most complex ones. Although the share of cultural tourism in overall tourism trends is already quite high, it is considered that its share will grow further in the future due to the change in the structure of tourists' needs and the increased popularity of the trend of learning about the cultural values of destinations (Csapo, 2012).

This paper presented the results of the research on the degree of promotion of cultural properties on Facebook by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia and is a part of a wider research related to the overall marketing activities of the National Tourism Organization of Serbia on social media. The survey covered all posts by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia on their Facebook pages in Serbian and English during the period from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2017. Due to the limitation of paper length, the results of the degree of promotion of cultural properties on the accounts of the National Tourism Organization of Serbia on Twitter and Instagram are missing out and will be used for future papers. The presented results showed fairly low level of promotion of cultural properties compared to the promotion of other tourism attractions, on average about 25%. The vast majority of promoted cultural properties were immovable cultural properties, mostly cultural monuments. In addition, since the Cultural Property Law does not define intangible cultural properties in detail, it is not surprising that their promotion was extremely rare. The research showed that the page in Serbian promoted cultural properties from a large number of different tourism destinations around Serbia, with no destination standing out, while the page in English promoted cultural properties from a rather smaller number of destinations, with two thirds of them being from Belgrade, which corresponds to the importance of Belgrade in foreign tourism movement. The research also analyzed the frequency of promotion of cultural properties on the UNESCO lists. The results showed that cultural properties from these lists were extremely rarely promoted, although they represent cultural properties of the highest importance. Based on the presented results, as well as on the importance of promotion of cultural properties, we can recommend increasing the frequency of promotion of cultural properties by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia on Facebook. More frequent promotion of cultural properties on UNESCO lists is especially recommended. In addition, further research is recommended to determine the level of promotion of cultural properties on the pages of other national tourism organizations from the region in order to gain insight into the wider picture of the frequency of promotion of cultural properties.



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