Importance of heritage interpretation for the cities in transition with layered identity: The case of Belgrade, Serbia

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Situation in Serbia

- The incoherent political context, lack of real long-term development planning and proper and efficient policies implementation.
- 30 years of unsuccessful transition process

What about tourism?

"Places with a reputation of being poor, uncultured, backward, dangerous or corrupt find that everything they or their citizens try to achieve outside their own neighborhood is harder, and the burden is always on their side to prove that they don’t conform to the national stereotype [...]. For the travel and tourism industry, these questions of the national image are fundamentally important. Put simply, a destination with a powerful and positive image needs to do less work and spend less money on promoting itself to the marketplace, because the marketplace already believes what it is telling them. It merely has to help buyers find and purchase the product."

Anholt 2010, p. 138-139

Tourists visiting Serbia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex Yugoslavia</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West and Southwest Europe</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rest of Southeastern countries</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South and Central America, Africa and Asia</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Europe</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia and North America</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Europe</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motives for visiting Serbia

- Cultural heritage: 62.4%
- Good price-quality ratio: 46.0%
- Hospitality: 44.8%
- Eno-gastronomic offer: 42.8%
- Entertainment, night life: 40.7%
- Accommodation: 35.3%
- Closeness of the destination: 21.7%
- Events: 20.2%
- Shopping: 14.4%
- Business events: 13.9%
- Sport and recreation: 13.6%
- Medical tourism: 11.9%
- Family events: 6.3%
- Business events-fairs: 5.2%
- Business events-conferences: 4.1%
- Other: 3.1%

National Tourism Organisation of Serbia, 2016

Destination branding and national identity

South-Eastern Europe’s transition

- Post-socialist transition at the beginning of the ‘90: the re-creation of national identities.
- Nation (re)building: monument building policy as part of a memory and identity policy was the phase of creation of new monuments to express the changes in national identity and values.

Dragicevic Sesic, 2004

- Europe integration process

The Confluence of Sava and Danube – the rivers of Belgrade
Research method

Geo-political settings: multiple perspectives on Belgrade’s historical events

Socio-anthropological settings: Self/Other dynamics, Balkanism

Concepts into context: Heritage, Memory, Identity

Heritage interpretation: Landscape, Soundscape, Place, Space, City

1. Theoretical framework: Readings

2. Empirical support: discourse and content analysis

Newspapers’ articles analysis

Governmental institutions’ materials analysis

Semi-structured interviews

Belgrade:
“The crossroads city”,
“Bastion of Europe against Ottomans”,
“Bulwark of Christianity”,
“The gate of the Balkans”,
“The key to Hungary”...

Heritage interpretation through:
- Landscape – seeing heritage
- Soundscape – hearing heritage
Place, space, city...

The identity of the citizens is the identity of the city

Thank you for your attention!