

ANTHROPOGENIC MOTIVES IN THE FUNCTION OF DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TOURISM IN THE SOUTHWEST REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Rukije IBRAIMI¹, Fatmire AMITI², Niagara XHEMAILI³, Xhejda JONUZI⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Department of Geography, University of Tetova

*Corresponding author e-mail: rukije.skenderi@unite.edu.mk

Abstract

The richness of tourist spaces is greater when there is an interrelationship between natural and anthropogenic forms. Unlike natural tourist motives, anthropogenic tourist motives are phenomena and processes in space that attract tourists and originated under the influence of human activity and creativity.

Anthropogenic motives are an extremely important element for the development of alternative forms of tourism. Unlike natural motives, anthropogenic motives primarily satisfy people's cultural needs; these values are important factors for human development and therefore for tourism. Cultural-historical monuments can act independently or as part of other tourist values that characterize a space such as the Southwest region of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The Southwest region is rich in cultural heritage with a total of 278 sites dating from different time periods, representing a large potential for the development of alternative forms of tourism.

Many tourists engage in travel motivated by a desire to satisfy their cultural needs, to learn about the historical and cultural heritage of certain countries or a region, and to experience achievements in various fields of culture, architecture, and art.

Key words: Southwest region, anthropogenic motives, events.

Geo-tourist position and communication

The Southwest region is located in the southwestern part of the Republic of North Macedonia with an exceptionally favorable geographic position and a high concentration of diverse natural and anthropogenic tourist values of global significance.

[5] Today its total area is 3,340 km², with 286 settlements and a total population of 177,398 inhabitants (2021). [3] Transport connectivity is an important precondition for tourism development, because it makes natural rarities and beauties accessible to modern people and links tourism supply with tourism demand.

The Republic of North Macedonia features a well-developed road network with a total length of 14,182 km, including motorways, main, regional and local roads. The main axes of the national road network are the two Pan-European corridors, Corridor 8 (east-west) and Corridor 10 (north-south). Most important is the Skopje–Ohrid route, along which runs much of the present main road M-4 (Skopje–Tetovo–Gostivar–Kichevo). This main road is the most developed tourist direction in North Macedonia and provides the region with strong predispositions for the development of alternative forms of tourism. This highway connects to many important main roads, increasing the tourist value of the Southwest region.

Anthropogenic motives in the function of developing alternative forms of tourism in the Southwest region of the Republic of North Macedonia

Cultural motives are one of the most important pillars for tourism development, transforming local heritage into an attractive tourism product. These values, including material and intangible goods, offer an authentic experience that is becoming increasingly popular among modern tourists.

[3] The Southwest region of North Macedonia is among the richest regions in cultural values with a total of 278 sites, which constitute significant national and even international heritage. Cultural values are inextricably linked to the natural beauties of the region, especially the Ohrid–Struga area, which is under UNESCO protection.

[3] Below are the numbers and types of cultural heritage per municipality in the Southwest region of North Macedonia:

Ohrid: 111 cultural heritage objects — churches, monasteries, a basilica, the Bay of Bones, archaeological sites, fortress/castle, fortress (citadel), mosque, tomb (turbe), tekke (Sufi lodge), museums and the old town;

Struga: 38 objects — churches, mosques, tekke, museums, the city library, archaeological sites, old town;

Vevchani: 35 objects — churches, old houses, archaeological sites;

Debar: 17 objects — churches, mosques, old houses, archaeological sites;

Debarce: 21 objects — churches, old houses, archaeological sites, fortress, memorial fountain, Leshan mill, memorial to fallen fighters of the National Liberation War (WWII), monument to freedom;

Kichevo: 24 objects — churches, old houses, archaeological sites, fortress, monastery, memorial tomb of Hristo Uzunov, Kichevo bazaar, museum, memorial construction;

Makedonski Brod: 12 objects — churches;

Plasnica: 1 object — Church of St. Nikola;

Centar Župa: 19 objects — churches and archaeological sites.

Source: Processed by the author

From the data above, we conclude that the Southwest region is very rich in cultural heritage with a total of 278 objects dating from different periods, representing a great potential for the development of alternative forms of tourism. By valorizing the total number of cultural heritage assets in the region, we can incorporate them to build a rich tourist offer for this type of tourism. This potential leads to spatial transformation and economic development of the Southwest region of the country. Below there are data on some of the most important sites.

Mesheshta has a rich history. The oldest archaeological locality near the village is the site of St. Elijah (Sv. Ilija), where remains from the older Iron Age have been found. At this location there is a small single-nave monastery church dedicated to St. Prophet Elijah.

[14] According to some sources, the old name of Mesheshta was Dabovo. Although there are no specific studies on the origin of the village's modern name, it probably derives from the Turkish word for oak—"meşe." The village name first appears in the Ottoman census of the Ohrid kaza from 1582 as Meshevishte. Types of alternative tourism forms: cultural-recreational, walking, rural, cultural-heritage, weekend-excursion.

[14] Among the cultural-historical landmarks concentrated in this area, greatest attention is drawn to the St. Naum monastery, the church of the Virgin of Zahumska, and the cave church of St. Stephen. Built on a high cliff in the old part of Ohrid, at one of the most beautiful spots on the shore of Lake Ohrid, the Church of St. John at Kaneo dates from the 13th century.

[10] Architecture is very important for studying Ohrid's medieval monuments because it represents a successful combination of Byzantine and Armenian elements.



Figure 1: Church of St. John at Kaneo in Ohrid
Source: www.macedonia-timeless.com

The frescoes have been preserved in the dome and altar area but are considerably damaged; for a long period between the 17th and 19th centuries the church was partially destroyed and abandoned, during which many of the frescoes were destroyed and lost forever.

The founding of this monastery is associated with the name Naum (Haum), a collaborator of Clement—both among the most renowned enlighteners of the Macedonian people. Naum's monastery with the Church of the Holy Archangel, as well as Clement's monastery with the Church of St. Panteleimon in Ohrid, are the first monuments of Slavic church architecture and art in the Southwest region. [4] The monastery and its interior are a quiet place for rest and walking, and together with its surroundings, the whole area captivates with the tranquil beauty of the pearly transparent water of the Black Drim source, one of the cleanest spots on the Ohrid shore.

After 530 years, on the day of the consecration of the renewed monastery, the relics of St. Clement of Ohrid were again transferred to Plaoshnik—the first Slavic bishop from 893 AD and the founder of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archbishopric. Here stood the Ohrid School of Slavic literacy, spirituality and culture, considered the first Slavic university in the world. This complex is one of the most important archaeological localities in the Southwest region and in the Republic of North Macedonia and is one of the most sacred places.

[14] Ohrid Fortress, the emblem of the Southwest region and the city of Ohrid, represents one of the largest medieval urban fortifications in North Macedonia. With its fortifications and walls it occupies the entire Ohrid ridge. From all sides, except the southern side facing the lake, the hilly part of the town was protected with high walls and towers extending about three kilometers, up to the proximity of Ohrid's harbor.

[12] The present form of the fortress dates from the time of Tsar Samuel, though records show later destructions and repairs by Turks and Byzantines. Under the partly ruined outer layer of the inner walls horizontal layers of bricks in Byzantine format are visible. In the walls of the upper gate many stones with Greek inscriptions are embedded, originating from ancient buildings that abound in the area.

[6] From history a large trace here is Katino Kale. The site dates from prehistoric times and is considered the place from which modern Kichevo originated, thus regarded as the core of the eponymous town. [15] The fortress of Katino Kale dates from the Roman period. Information on Kichevo's existence is available from Byzantine emperor Basil II. Later Katino Kale served as the seat of Turkish authorities and around 1850 lost its role and was abandoned; locals were later allowed to use stones from the fortress to build structures.

[15] Developed tourism forms include: cultural-recreational, weekend, walking, cultural-heritage, weekend-excursion.

[3] The Museum of Western Macedonia is of great importance for this region; it is located in the building of the Main Headquarters of the National Liberation Army of Macedonia during WWII. The museum opened in 1980 and is located on the central square in Kichevo.

The Bay of Bones is located at Gradishte in Lake Ohrid. In 1977 the first underwater archaeological research in Macedonia was conducted at the site Plocha Mičov Grad in the Bay of Bones, along the south shore of the Gradishte peninsula near the village of Peshtani.

At depths of three to five meters numerous wooden piles were found driven into the lakebed and many movable archaeological materials dating to the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age (roughly 1200 BCE to 700 BCE). It is assumed that this and other similar settlements on Lake Ohrid belong to the period when the first tribal populations began to form. [14] Researchers recorded 6,000 wooden piles during campaign surveys between 1997 and 2005. Measurements indicate the settlement covered approximately 8,500 m². Remains were discovered about ten meters from the shore of the Bay of Bones, on the southern shore of the Gradishte peninsula, extending 155 m (west–east) by 55 m (north–south).

[3] The ancient theater is located at the foothill of the eastern slope of the higher Ohrid ridge, under Samuel's fortress, near one of the main entrances to the fortified town—Gorna Porta—offering unforgettable views of Lake Ohrid and the surrounding mountains.

It was built over two millennia ago, toward the end of the 3rd or beginning of the 2nd century BCE, during the late Hellenistic period, intended for dramatic, musical and poetic performances. The first supposition that there was a theater in the ancient Lichnid (today's Ohrid) came from the Russian art historian Nikodim P. Kondakov at the beginning of the 20th century; first archaeological excavations occurred in 1935. [15] In 1999 a project began to fully reveal and put it into function, and since 2001 the reconstructed open stage of the ancient theater again hosts dramatic performances, music events and various manifestations after twenty centuries.

Other important museums in the Southwest region include: the Natural Science Museum, the "Dr. Nikola Nezlobinski" Museum, the Memorial House of the Miladinov Brothers, the Vangel Kodžoman Memorial Gallery. The ethnological department organizes the event "Review of Folk Costumes," a traditional show of folk dress and folklore.

[16] Ali Pasha Mosque — Ali Pasha Mosque is believed to be among the first mosques built in North Macedonia. This square-shaped mosque is thought to have been built of stone and fired brick at the end of the 15th or beginning of the 16th century. In 1823 a madrasa was established within the mosque complex, though it no longer exists today. Remains of a minaret are on the south side of the mosque; it was destroyed in 1912 and has not been rebuilt. It is believed there was another minaret on the western part raised by Sultan Bayezid II (1481–1512).

[3] The base of Ali Pasha Mosque is square, 15 x 15 meters, above which rises an octagonal tambour and above it another twelve-sided tambour crowned by a shallow dome. The interior transitions are solved with pendentives. All sides of the harem continuously lead to the single point of the dome that symbolizes the unity of Allah. The relatively narrow window openings are characteristic of local masonry, suggesting the builder was likely from Ohrid. The interior features unity of space, simplicity of forms and dominance of volume. The mihrab, set in the southeastern wall, is simple—recessed in the wall without decorative elements and framed with a shallow profiled frame. The minbar is carved from stone and bears the only decorative elements in the interior. On the upper part of the minbar shallow relief rosettes and cypress motifs appear, an ancient and universal funerary symbol, typical of folk motifs from the late 18th and early 19th centuries.



Figure 2: Ali Pasha Mosque in Ohrid

Source: www.ohrid.com.mk

Along the entire length of the mosque's southwest side is the mahfil, which calms the interior volume. The minaret's remains lie on the south side; it was destroyed in 1912 and never rebuilt. Based on its foundation dimensions, it was a minaret whose height and elegance dominated this part of Ohrid's bazaar. It was built of brick and accessed from both the porch and the mahfil in the mosque.

[13] Inchkar Mosque is an Islamic temple located in Debar. According to an inscription above the mosque entrance, written in irregular sulus script in five lines, the mosque was built in the period 1467–68.

Inchkar Mosque was built as a vakıf (endowment) of Mehmed II (1451–1481). It sits in a spacious yard with numerous older graves and richly decorated tombstones. The building is rectangular, measuring 12.70 x 9.38 meters, covered by a hipped roof. The prayer hall (harem) is the preserved part of the authentic building; its old walls and window forms have maintained their original shape and placement.

[3] In the courtyard of the Fatih Sultan Mehmed Mosque is the turbe (tomb) of Shaban-Baba. The turbe is of the open type with an octagonal base. Polygonal columns forming the turbe are connected by vaulted arches. The turbe was built of well-dressed stone blocks, which indicates the importance of the persons buried there. Based on stylistic features it was built toward the 18th or early 19th century, a period when the turbe of Kaplan-pasha in Tirana, with similar stylistic-architectural characteristics, was built.

[17] Juma Mosque or Sultan Bayazid Mosque is an archaeological site in Kichevo representing a medieval object. During earthworks for building a fountain in the mosque courtyard, fragments of ceramic vessels, roof tiles and other building material were found, suggesting a medieval structure was located in its immediate vicinity.

Other known mosques in the Southwest region include: Bajram Mosque, Salahuddin Ayubi Mosque (Labunishta), Tekke Mosque, Inchkar Mosque-Debar, Central Mosque-Veleshta, mosques in Gorna Belica, Dolna Belica, Jablaniça, Juma (Sultan Bayazid) Mosque-Kichevo, Mustafa Çelebi Mosque-Struga, Hajji Durgut's Mosque (the oldest mosque in Ohrid, built in 1466), etc.

[4] In the Southwest region tekkes (Sufi lodges), turbes (tombs) and memorial houses are also well-known attractions for alternative tourism. The most significant are: the memorial house of the father of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Ali Riza Efendi (Debar), Hayati Baba Tekke, Çulu Baba Tekke, Sheh Selim Tekke-Kichevo, Helveti Hayat Tekke-Struga, Zeynel Abedin Pasha Tekke-Ohrid, Saat Kula of Suleiman Agha-Ohrid, Turbe of Sinan Çelebi, etc.

Among cultural monuments in the form of old urban architecture and preserved old town complexes and houses are cultural heritage assets preserved despite strong pressures from urbanization and new architecture. Among them the most significant are the Varosh complex

in Ohrid and the Robevci and Uranija houses, and the old part of Struga. From more recent historical monuments and memorials noteworthy are the Monument to the Fallen Fighters of the National Liberation War (WWII) in Ohrid and Struga.

The old bazaars of both Ohrid and Struga are full of shops, small restaurants and confectioneries; they are some of the busiest places in the cities and among the most pleasant spots for walking and shopping. The old bazaar is an ideal part of town for buying souvenirs and Ohrid pearls. Types of alternative tourism: cultural-recreational, weekend, walking, cultural-heritage, lake-related, weekend-excursion, sport-recreational, cultural-event tourism. Events (manifestations) are part of anthropogenic tourist motives; they represent various ways and forms of public expression and presentation of phenomena and processes with interesting content that can attract visitors on their own, and more often serve as complementary features of the region's tourist offer.

[3] Events present cultural-artistic, sports, economic, religious, entertainment and promotional manifestations, which besides their general significance, have tourist characteristics. [1] Through them, in a lively, dynamic and above all authentic way, the ancient customs and culture of a people or population are displayed.

[2] In this context, events as tourist motives will be considered through the existing ones, while also noting opportunities for new attractive events that would enrich the tourist stay in the region and could, in the foreseeable future, become motives for tourist movements and the development of alternative forms of tourism.

The region is strongly boosted by major international and national events. Cultural events of special significance include: "Struga Poetry Evenings," "Ohrid Summer," "The Balkan Festival of Folk Songs and Dances," "Struga Music Autumn," "Jazz Festival," "May Opera Evenings," "Goce Days," "International Festival of the Film Camera Brothers Manaki," "World Gallery of Caricature," "Review of Folk Costumes," "Ohrid Old Town Meetings" and other locally oriented events.

Struga Poetry Evenings is the largest international poetry event held annually in Struga. First held on 15 July 1961, on the occasion of the publication of the collection of the Miladinov brothers, the idea arose to organize a traditional festival-type event in the town as an annual review of poetic achievements in the Republic of Macedonia.

[17] The event is a fundamental marker of the town as a tourist center and is attended by at least 200 poets from around the world. At the poetry festival among other awards the highest recognition for lifetime poetic achievement—the "Golden Wreath"—and the "Miladinov Brothers" award for the best poetry book in the Macedonian language are presented.

Struga Poetry Evenings experienced rapid growth and quickly became a unique international event of its kind, a bridge between literary meridians of the world. It represents an important forum from which each year the polyphony of the poetic word, its humane messages and its power to ennoble and bring people together resound.

[16] Each year Struga Poetry Evenings is a real festival both for the town and for all poetry lovers. It has become an important cultural event in the world of literature—an event through which one can, as through an open window, see and hear what is happening in poetry, in that "country without borders." By promoting poetry and its values, Struga Poetry Evenings has an invaluable mission in our approaching world.

The name Struga Poetry Evenings is included on all poetic maps of the world. Struga lives in all who have visited and seen it; it will be on the way for those who will see it for the first time. "If somewhere there is a biblical heavenly paradise of ideal beauty, then one of its earthly corners is this town," wrote one of many foreign participants, departing from Struga.

Ohrid Summer is an international music and stage festival held in Ohrid under the patronage of the President of the Republic of North Macedonia. The festival is a member of the European

Festivals Association. The beginning of the “Ohrid Summer” festival dates from 4 August 1961. [14] A major development was its joining the European Festivals Union in 1994. Later, in 2001, a new stage space was introduced—the Ancient Theater. Since then the festival’s opening traditionally takes place at this location on 12 July, and its closing on 20 August.

One of the most famous events in Vevchani is the Vevchani Carnival. Written sources testify that the carnival is at least 1,460 years old, but archaeological finds indicate it has existed for at least 2,200 years. Today the carnival is an interesting and unusual mingling of pagan and Christian customs. Traditionally participants try to avoid introducing modern carnival elements, but in recent years, organized by the Municipality and the Ministry of Culture, order has been introduced into this otherwise timelessly chaotic event.

[11] Vevchani Carnival is essentially a masked custom called “St. Vasili” (Vasilica). It is celebrated on 13 and 14 January each year and is dedicated to St. Basil the Great. On that day the Orthodox New Year is welcomed and the old year is sent away. It is originally a pagan custom that has been preserved here to the present day. Participants are called “vasilichari” — masked individuals and groups of all ages organized by neighborhood. Since 1993 the carnival has been a member of the Association of European Carnival Cities.



Figure 3: Vevchani Carnival
Sources: www.cac.org.mk / www.sdk.mk

Conclusion

Protection of cultural wealth implies care and maintenance of selected or designated spaces, which due to their cultural and spiritual values are specifically analyzed and assessed spatially and temporally. Man, as part of nature and as the main factor in its transformation processes, strives through his activities to exploit natural and cultural resources for tourism development. The Southwestern region is rich in cultural heritage with a total of 278 capacities/sites, dating from different time periods and representing a great potential for the development of alternative forms of tourism; thanks to these assets the region attracts a large number of tourists. In recent years the number of tourists in the Southwestern region has been steadily increasing: in 2022 there were a total of 378,226 tourists; in 2023 there were 451,598 tourists, of whom 244,254 were foreign tourists — for the first time surpassing the number of

domestic tourists. In 2025 the number of tourists reached 539,096 with 222,251 domestic tourists and 316,845 foreign tourists.

Any country, region or area that strives for balanced development of alternative forms of tourism simultaneously pays great attention to preserving natural and cultural values, and through this development they can be incorporated to build a rich tourism offer.

Thanks to the rich potential of the Southwestern region, it represents a special area of interest and value, not only nationally but also internationally.

References

- [1] Панов Н., &Штетик С., *Туристичка географија*, Сечектор, Скопје, 2008
- [2] Ибраими Р., *"Антропогените фактори и нивното значење за развојот на туризмот во Полошката Котлина"*, Скопје 2012 (Магистреска дисертација)
- [3] Ибраими Р., *"УЛОГАТА НА АЛТЕРНАТИВНИТЕ ФОРМИ НА ТУРИЗМОТ ВО ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЈАТА НА ТУРИСТИЧКИТЕ ЕДИНИЦИ ВО ЈУГОЗАПАДНИОТ РЕГИОН НА РЕПУБЛИКА СЕВЕРНА МАКЕДОНИЈА"* Скопје, 2022 (Докторска дисертација)
- [4] Природно и културно наследство на Охридскиот регион, 2019-2028
- [5] www.makstat.gov.mk
- [6] www.arhiva.moepp.gov.mk
- [7] www.portal.mdt.gov.mk
- [8] www.js.ugd.edu.mk
- [9] www.southeast.mk
- [10] www.cac.org.mk
- [11] www.sdk.mk
- [12] www.makedonskibiser.com.mk
- [13] www.дебар.гов.мк
- [14] www.ohrid.com.mk
- [15] www.museum.org.mk
- [16] www.struga.gov.mk
- [17] www.wikipedia.org