

Tourism Potential of Public Libraries in India

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Abstract

Libraries are usually centers of cultural life especially in small communities and, in tourism; they could become places of cultural interaction between the culture of visitors and the culture of the local population. By storing spiritual and intellectual works, they testify to the cultural heritage of places and allow access to various works of art, promoting awareness of cultural identity. On the other hand, local communities, through libraries, gain insight into cultural achievements at a global level. Beside their collections, libraries also have a wide range of other resources that could be attractive to tourists.

The purpose of this paper was to find out which library resources have the potential to become either tourist attractions or tourism services. In the research a qualitative approach was applied with the purpose of describing, deepening and expanding knowledge of the potential of libraries in tourism.

Keywords: *library resources in tourism; heritage in libraries; cultural heritage; cultural identity*

1. Introduction

Libraries, as cultural institutions and guardians of literary heritage, were indirectly connected with tourism since their early days. The beginnings of literary tourism date back to the 18th century and are linked to the bardolatry (Shaw, 1901), that is, Shakespeare's admirers who travelled to his native Stratford upon Avon. Since Shakespeare was called Bard of Avon they

were called bardolaters. According to Eagle and Carnell (1977), literary heritage-based tourism can be traced back to literary pilgrims. In the very beginning of tourism development, libraries played an important role in the tourism offer. Libraries were needed by tourists in order to get information about their destination and its surroundings, and to meet their own cultural needs. As a result, tourism development planners have anticipated the cultural and intellectual needs of tourists, taking into account their reading affinities as well (Tokić & Kranjčević, 2018). Aware of the importance of a library to tourists, apart from the library building, in their advertisements hotels highlighted reading rooms to make the tourists relax and socialize in a pleasant ambience.

Modern trends related to the library are reflected in thematic hotels, such as the Hotel Library in Amsterdam, the Library Hotel in New York, The Literary Man in Portugal, Book and Bed in Tokyo, The Library - a luxurious hotel in Thailand, etc. (STA Travel, 2015). Also, the Library of Birmingham and the British Library are listed among the UK's most popular tourist attractions. (Kitching, 2016).

2. Literature review

Here is little research aiming to examine the role of libraries in the tourism. But in view of the above, libraries should not be omitted from research since they are usually centers of cultural and public life of their communities, which is particularly highlighted in the case of small communities. Research provided below refers to authors who made relevant research on the role of libraries in tourism. It should be noted that there is a very small number of systematic and relevant research papers on this topic. It seems that the relationship between libraries and tourism is not a common topic among the authors of either of these two areas. There is a lack of research regarding the connection between libraries and tourism industry, except in the cases of large and famous libraries such as The British Library, Bibliotheke Nationale de France and the Alexandria library, where the number of tourists and visitors is so large, it simply cannot be overlooked. But many local authorities as well as professional tourism organizations overlook libraries in their tourism plans and other operational documents, while this is not the case with other heritage organizations such as galleries and museums.

Bovero (2009) considers the possibilities of linking culture, education, tourism and information-communication technologies in Italy. According to the conclusions of her work, cultural tourism has an interest in libraries and vice versa. A case study of the Australian State Library in Queensland (Carson, Hawkes, Gislason & Martin, 2013) deals with the role of libraries in literary tourism. The article shows the importance of developing emotions for a place that tourists associate with culture, literary history and the community, as well as the importance of engaging social communities in tourism. Spentza and Kyriakaki (2013) conducted research at Adamantios Koraes Library in Greece and concluded that incorporating this library into international tourist guides would have a positive impact on attracting tourists, especially those with cultural and educational interests.

Zović (2011) examines the role of the public library in cultural tourism of the Istrian County and concludes that this role is not adequately valorized. In the research on the role of Istrian public libraries in cultural tourism, Jelinčić and Zović (2012) show that the share of these libraries in cultural tourism is not satisfactory.

3. Background

Examples of the successful development of different tourism segments for specific interests of tourists, such as cultural tourism, rural tourism, cycling tourism etc., show that the tourism industry is widely recognized as a driving force which facilitates involvement of local people in economic activities of any region. If managed properly, tourism industry connected with culture can provide the basis for sustainable economic development of local communities. Namely, culture is considered the fourth pillar of sustainable development alongside economic, social and environmental issues (UCLG, 2004; UNESCO, 2013). Cultural heritage consists of the resources inherited from the past in all forms and aspects - tangible, intangible and digital (created digital and digitized), including monuments, sites, landscapes, skills, practices, knowledge and expressions of human creativity, as well as collections conserved and managed by public and private bodies such as museums, libraries and archives. It originates from the interaction between people and places through time and is constantly evolving. These resources are of great value to society from a cultural, environmental, social and economic point of view (Council of the European Union, 2014). This implies the need to protect the cultural heritage and to raise awareness of its value by the community. Culture itself is a transversal and integrating

phenomenon, so cultural change and development cannot be achieved independently of other areas (educational, economic, social, environmental) (UNESCO, 2013; Culture Active Europe, 2013). The Europe 2020 (2010) states inter-sector political relevance, the positive economic and social impact of cultural heritage and its potential to generate sustainable development. The document The European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, points out many shapes and forms of cultural heritage: tangible – for example buildings, monuments, artifacts, clothing, artwork, books, machines, historic towns, archaeological sites; intangible – practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - and the associated instruments, objects and cultural spaces - that people value. This includes language and oral traditions, performing arts, social practices and traditional craftsmanship; natural – landscapes, Flora and fauna; digital – resources that were created in digital form (for example digital art or animation) or that have been digitalised as a way to preserve them, including text, images, video, records (The European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018). According to Horizon 2020 (2015) the European Union should vigorously promote the innovative use of cultural heritage for economic growth and jobs, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. Cultural heritage does not entail, as is often claimed, solely costs, nor is it only limited to aspects related to identity, it also has multiple effects:

- 1) Economic - promoting innovative finance, investment, governance, management and business models to increase the effectiveness of cultural heritage as an economic production factor,
- 2) Social - promoting the innovative use of cultural heritage to encourage integration, inclusiveness, cohesion, and participation, and
- 3) Environment - promoting innovative and sustainable use of cultural heritage to enable it to realize its full potential contribution to the sustainable development of European cultural landscapes and environments (Horizon 2020, 2015).

4. Methodology

The paper explores libraries on the west coast of India, which is traditionally the most developed tourist region, with the purpose to find out whether coastal libraries, with their resources (heritage, buildings, collections, services and activities) could be included in tourism products and which of their resources could be employed to create new cultural attractions for the development and enrichment of the tourism offer. The starting point was the fact that tourists, besides visiting tourist attractions, often need service information about local destination, free access to internet and social media, as well as information about local attractions, and introduction to local community customs, traditions, and identity. Some tourists need particular forms of personal entertainment like borrowing and reading a book on the beach etc. which is also a service available in the public libraries in this tourism region. Those and other library services available to tourists (such as workshops, exhibitions, concerts or other events in libraries) are a realization of their information, education and cultural functions which can be and often are focused on tourists needs, for instance, the adjustment of library working time during the tourist season (Tokić 2015a, 2015b).

A qualitative approach in the research was applied with the purpose of describing, deepening and expanding knowledge of the potential of libraries in tourism. Desk research gathered data on library resources with tourism potential.

5. Results

Based on the above mentioned criteria and collected data, the sample of 96 libraries was identified of which 61 are public, 12 museum, 3 memorial, 5 university, 13 special and 2 scientific libraries. These 96 libraries are listed in the five states along the west coast of India which have significant cultural resources (recognized cultural goods) or other resources (cultural resources that are not officially recognized but may become attractive to tourists, services, events) that have the potential to become tourist attractions. Results of this study show that libraries on west coast have a wide range of resources (Table 1) with potential to create new cultural and tourist attractions in the development and enrichment of the tourist offer.

Table 1
Potential tourism resources in libraries

Written collections	Other types of collections	Cultural programs	Educational programs	Publishing activities	Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rare books• Old books• Incunabula• Manuscripts• Local heritage collections• Journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maps• Posters• Postcards• Musical Instruments• Music notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exhibitions• Concerts• Literary evenings• Book promotions• Film projections• Theatre plays	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workshops (film, IT, Art etc.)• Round tables• Lectures (travel, medical, Literary, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Books• Brochures• Prospects• Informational services• Digitalized contents• Free access to internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Various anniversaries• Book nights

Library resources with potentials to create new cultural and tourist attractions provided in Table 1 can be divided into four groups: i) library collections (written collections and other types of collections); ii) library buildings; iii) library activities (cultural and educational programs, events and publishing activities); and iv) library services. Library collections may include written collections such as rare books, old books, collections of incunabula, manuscripts, local heritage collections, journals, maps, photographs, etc. Among them, local heritage collections are particularly relevant since they contain specific local written and non-written heritage, which is often publicly presented by libraries through a variety of activities such as exhibitions, concerts and workshops with a plethora of information from their collections about the community. At a time of widespread global standardized culture and tourist offer and the increasing demand for something special, such heritage collections with their local specific features are a good basis for marketing and popularization of cultural tourism for certain destinations (Petrić, 2016). Libraries also contain collections of manuscripts, books and other legacies of writers or famous persons (Bošnjaković & Lučevnjak, 2016) related to a certain place which can be used for a new cultural and tourist narrative. Furthermore, the characteristic library collections can serve as the basis for

the creation of local souvenirs. In this group other types of collections are included as well, such as maps, posters, postcards, musical instruments, music notes etc. Monastery and other religious libraries, besides old and rare books which are often very attractive due to their illuminations, also contain various items used for the purpose of Holy masses and other religious occasions, as well as various ethnographic items connected with local tradition and customs Library buildings - libraries are often housed in buildings of historic, artistic or architectural significance. They can be examples of different artistic epochs or be the work of famous architects. Also, due to their exceptional architectural features, modern library buildings are becoming a part of cultural heritage. Library interiors could also be attractive to tourists.

Library activities – as cultural centers of towns and villages, numerous libraries organize, or participate in the organization of various attractive cultural and educational programs and events. Such events enrich the local tourist product, and include various kinds of concerts (classical concerts, contemporary music, recitals etc.), literary evenings, exhibitions (art paintings, comics, various items from local cultural and natural heritage, postcards, posters, etc.), book promotions, a wide range of workshops (film workshops, IT, art workshops etc.), lectures (travel, medical, literary, etc), film projections, theatre plays, etc

6. Conclusions and implications

Inspired by new trends in the tourism market which emphasize diversification in the tourism product for satisfying the individual interests of tourists, development of cultural and sustainable tourism, in-creasing interest for revealing cultural identities and traditions of local destinations and residents, the tourism industry seeks for the development of new and diversified products, which can be adjusted to fit these needs. Although libraries, with their collections, services and availability have been very important to tourists since the very beginnings of tourism, in recent decades this has fallen into oblivion and researchers pay less attention to the role of libraries in tourism year by year. With the intention to fill this gap, this research paper was undertaken to explore which resources of libraries on Indian west coast could have the potential to create new cultural and tourist attractions for the development and enrichment of the tourist offer. The conducted research has shown that libraries are abundant with resources that might be of interest to tourists if they are presented appropriately. The results identified resources in libraries with

tourism potential that could be divided into six groups: library collections, library buildings, publishing activities, cultural and educational programs, library services, and digitized content. To properly use the potentials of library resources in tourism industry, it would be necessary to connect different stakeholders such as representatives of libraries, tourist offices, tourist entrepreneurs, marketing professionals, local authorities and other businesses in order to design and facilitate the realization of tourist products based on the contents from libraries (such as attractive library buildings and interiors, interesting rare books, famous historical or cultural persons connected with a particular library, stories for other tourism products, and various events and services oriented toward both tourists and locals).

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