

THE SOUVENIR INDUSTRY AS AN ADDITIONAL TOURIST ACTIVITY

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***Abstract:** The sale of souvenirs is an important additional tourist activity in the majority of the tourist centers. Its consideration as part of the additional tourism activities is in the context of the production and trade of similar products, which provide additional economic revenue for the tourist destinations and the local communities, while its role for tourism is also assessed in the paper. The preferences of foreign tourists in Bulgaria - in terms of local souvenirs - have been revealed. Those preferences largely predefine the product orientation of this complementary tourism industry.*

***Keywords:** souvenir, industry, tourism, impact*

The souvenir industry in the world

Currently, it is estimated that the number of souvenir and gift shops around the world is over 30,000. The annual revenue from this activity is around \$ 17 billion (www.hoovers.com). Some of the leading companies are Disney, Hallmark, Spencer Gift, etc. A common feature of all souvenir makers is their high labor intensity. Very often souvenirs are made manually. The share of a worker in the total volume of profits in the souvenir industry is only \$ 80,000 per year. In the souvenir trade there has been an increase in the supply to large shops or shopping centers (unlike the case of Bulgaria). The average area of such a store worldwide is about 2400 sq.m. One third of all stores have average annual sales of over \$ 250,000. This is largely due to large souvenir stores of big companies such as Disney. The Philippines exhibit good experience in the souvenir industry, where more than 80 % of tourists' spendings - after paying the tourist package - are on buying souvenirs (Dagooc, 2010). The country's tourism industry earns over \$ 30 million a year from selling souvenirs alone.

Additional text: Postcards

The postcard history is related to photography and postal messages. Austro-Hungary is considered the birthplace of the postcard, and the year is 1869. This is thirty years after Daguerre's ingenious invention - the photograph. The initiative was of Emanuel Ferman, a professor at the Military Academy.

In 1892, at the time of the First Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition in Plovdiv, the first illustrated postcard was published in Bulgaria. A real boom in their spread followed the adoption of the Postal Act, which allowed in 1897

different agencies and private individuals to issue postal "images" - plain illustrated postcards.

A leading company in the postcards trade today is Hallmark. It was founded by the three brothers - Joyce, Rollie and William Hall - in the early twentieth century. The company was founded in 1921. Two years later, in 1923, they already had 120 employees and a huge six-storey office. At present, the company holds 52 % of the postcards market in the world.

Plush toys

The father of the favorite plush toys is a German national named Richard Steiff. Before he created his first teddy bear, he had been observing a family of bears at the local zoo for months. In 1902 he created the first plush toy. The "godfather" of the bear is the US President Theodore Roosevelt, as the bear was called Teddy Bear after him. In 1907 nearly 1 million toys were sold. Today, the plush toys market (as souvenirs) is enormous. Many collectors gather at annual exhibitions around the world.

The role of souvenirs in the tourism industry

The word "souvenir" is of French origin. According to the Bulgarian dictionary the souvenir is a "*small, artistically crafted object, which serves as a memento*". It is from this definition that the whole philosophy of making these objects originates. Those small objects serve as memories. For this reason, the tourist buys something, which later brings them back to the place of their visit. Tourists want to associate the object with a particular location or custom in a particular country. Therefore, from the point of view of the production and trade of souvenirs, this is an "investment in memory". As such, the tourist will only look for the different and unique products that characterize the particular destination.

From this point of view, souvenirs are the advertisers of the tourist destination or settlement. They will become the tourists' most lasting memory of their trip. In addition to the numerous photos, the souvenir will be the only thing that will tell and promote the location visited. Thus the souvenir is also becoming an advertising product.

From an economic point of view, this is an activity that still has no purely industrial development. Souvenir making in Bulgaria is rather practiced as a craftsmanship, the result of which is a variety of souvenirs. Within the tourist center or settlement, the trade of *objects of memory* is a normal continuation of the production activity. Therefore, the role of souvenirs in the tourist industry has an economic, but also a psychological and advertising value. From the point of view of Bulgarian tourism the role of souvenirs can be summarized in the following features:

A. For the *tourist settlement* the souvenir production:

- creates employment;
- increases the revenues from souvenir trade;
- performs indirect advertising;
- enhances the settlement's ethnographic appearance;
- highlights its competitive advantages;
- preserves the identity and cultural characteristics of the settlement;
- preserves ancient craft industries for the future generations of the given country;
- enhances the branding process of the tourist settlement;

B. For the *tourists*:

- reinforces the memory of the location visited;
- gives an idea of the "different" - from their (of the tourists) way of life - and the surrounding world;
- serves to advertise the already visited tourist center / settlement.

Due to the above-mentioned features, the production and trade of souvenirs should be developed following an individual plan for each tourist destination. The overall marketing of the tourist location must give the exact parameters for the development of souvenir trade. It should also be regulated and in line with the overall advertising strategy and branding of the given tourist destination. The ethnographic and cultural aspect of the settlement should be taken into account when defining the product list. On the one hand, local authorities should not allow the sale of just any souvenirs, while on the other hand local craft production should be encouraged. The latter even serves as a tourist attraction in situ¹. "Marketing of the Tradition" is a concept that has been gaining momentum in developed countries. According to Brewer (1994) it is expressed by:

- Transformation and modification of the tradition in compliance with the tourist market. Introduction of changes in the presentation of a given destination, through new methods and forms. Introduction of deliberately created objects, representing the image of the given tourist center.
- Using traditional concepts and forms to create an association with traditional ideas – displaying local crafts, for example.
- "False folklore" or "pseudo-traditions" - creating things that are similar to the traditional ones, for commercial purposes (for example, the restoration of fire dancing in places away from its traditional area of origin and application, namely – the Strandzha Mountain region). A suitable example in the case of the souvenir industry is the ubiquitous distribution of Trojan ceramics, which is produced and marketed in non-traditional centers.

¹ In situ – on the spot

- Cultural heritage tourism - popularizing the community and the cultural image of the region through festivals, participation of tourists in local customs and rituals, combined with the production and trade of traditional souvenirs for the given event. It is very often combined with the production of replicas of valuable items of national importance, which act as a souvenir for foreign tourists.

The souvenir industry through the eyes of the merchant, the local authorities and the foreign tourist.

The presented marketing concepts can orient the souvenir vendors in terms of creating their product list. Obviously, with local authorities guidance, merchants would trade on the market much more traditional souvenirs rather than the mass kitsch of small, unnecessary items that are massively offered in various (in their outlook and profile) tourist centers.

In Bulgaria, from the point of view of the souvenir merchant, things are reduced to profits only (Yaneva, 2007). According to the author, as far as the merchant in Bulgaria is concerned, it does not matter what they sell in terms of quality, ethnic or aesthetic value. It is enough for souvenirs to be in tune with the local color. According to foreign authors (Baretje et al.), tourism is an exchange between economic and cultural values. This concept is mainly valid for countries with developed folklore, traditional way of living, or ones which are centers of ancient civilizations, and Bulgaria is such a country. In this sense, souvenir merchants are interested in "selling a tradition". This is the root of the difference in the souvenir trade between the different countries. In Bulgaria, traditional souvenirs such as pottery or the *martenitsa* are imported from China. The merchant - driven by the idea of maximum profit - is not interested in the authenticity of the product, and very often even advertises it as made by "old local craftsmen". The requirements for merchants need to be increased. Often these souvenir vendors are young people employed seasonally. Typically, the varied pile of items they sell does not disturb them. This is exactly how the stalls in the old part of Nessebar look (in the photo), where all kinds of kitsch is offered, while many sellers do not even know the origin and the history of the souvenirs they sell. Rare are the cases of connoisseurs of the tourists' psychology, their interests and their national differences. Knowing traditions is also a prerequisite for profitable trading with souvenirs.

A good example of developing thematic souvenirs related to the appearance of the settlement is Gabrovo (Tsankova, 2005). The idea of to creating the Gabrovo humorous souvenirs arose with the creation of the House of Humor and Satire (1972), designed to be developed as an attractive tourist center, which, along with the exhibition halls, opened (in 1975) a souvenir stall and a semi-bar with painted walls and ceilings in the style of the Gabrovo anecdotes by Boris Dimovski. It is Dimovski who developed the first series of

ceramic half-cups for Gabrovo coffee, called "one coffee for two", a sugar-baked dough, a scoop with a hole, a coffee cup with a glued saucer, a fortune telling coffee cup, etc.

The role of local authorities with regard to the souvenir industry is to regulate the permissions for selling souvenirs while still in their embryos. Such permissions should only be issued to merchants who are able to prove the local origin of the products they sell. The profiling of souvenirs according to the ethnic, ethnographic, folklore and everyday aspect of the tourist center is even more important. Compromise can be made with objects and customs of national importance (as in the case of fire dancing, for example). The authorities should encourage local craftsmen to preserve and display their crafts to the tourist audience. A good opportunity to do this is through EU funding (see the topic of Project Tourism Financing).

The price and transportability is essential to buying a souvenir from a customer's point of view. These conditions reduce the choice to small, easily portable, sustainable and cheap items. Further preferences depend on gender, age, type of travel (group or individual), the purpose of stay, etc. According to Yaneva (2007), the buyers in the big resorts are holidaymakers and show less interest in the offered products. Visitors of museum expositions have a developed idea of the offered product and pay much better attention to souvenirs. Tourists whose purpose is touring around Bulgaria are more attentive and have a greater interest in the local culture. They are more likely to bring memories from our country and often consult with the tour guides in advance. Young foreign tourists hardly ever enter souvenir shops – such tourists are more likely to buy something for themselves - chains, bracelets, rings, etc.

The general opinion on the financial profile of the tourists is that they are becoming less solvent, which also affects their interest in buying a souvenir. In a survey among the vendors of souvenirs, certain differences between the market behaviour of the representatives of different nationalities have been observed. For example, the Russians and the Greeks tend to bargain for the price of the item, while Jews buy the cheapest goods. Americans, on the other hand, prefer handmade items and are willing to spend a significant amount of money on them. The Dutch, the Germans and the Scandinavians buy practical items, while the Scandinavians only buy things that will be useful to them in their everyday life. Italians and Spaniards – typical representatives of the southern hospitality - buy small souvenirs but in large quantities. This is because of the tradition to buy a gift for every member of the family. Spaniards in addition like pyrographic items or t-shirts with the inscription "Bulgaria". The French like handcrafted icons. The Japanese like the Bulgarian embroidery and everything that was made on the basis of the famous Bulgarian rose oil.

It is this differentiated look at the preferences of tourists which should be considered when offering souvenirs in a particular destination. Logically,

before the souvenir production is available, an estimate of the tourist flow to the given tourist resort by nationality should be made. The estimate conclusions, combined with the typical ethnographic and local appearance of the settlement, will give the winning answer to the question of what type of souvenirs should be available on the market.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it is clear that offering souvenirs should not be an end by itself. It is an industry (if we accept craft production and trade as inseparable activities) that is subordinated to the common market mechanisms of supply and demand. The specificity that should always be taken into account is that the souvenir is not an ordinary commodity. It is a combination of the spirit and traditions of the settlement, the desire of the tourists for long memories and the desire of the local population to preserve their culture and their lifestyle in the small objects of memory. In this connection, the following should be considered:

- The attractive craft workshops should be preserved as a tourism resource.
- Good practices in relation to the preservation of cultural heritage not only as tourism oriented crafts, but also as an opportunity for branding individual regions and areas, should be increased.
- Tourist behavior regarding the profiling of the souvenir industry, needs to be studied.
- The local souvenir industry should be protected as a "trademark of a protected region" and be categorized in order to protect authenticity.

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