

**TOURISM AND DURABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**



## ETHNO ANIMATION AS A SPECIFIC FORM OF TOURIST ANIMATION

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**Abstract:** *Ethno-animation, as an integral part of modern tourist offer, is intended for those tourists interested in ethno-tourism which, as a selective form of tourism, is predominantly connected to rural, cultural and eco-tourism. In relation to other forms of tourism, the ethno-tourism provides the best contribution to acquiring better knowledge of culture and historical heritage of receptive countries and nations. Its objective is dual: on the one hand, it is an active and pleasant vacation for tourists, and on the other hand, it means getting familiar with traditional folk material and spiritual creative works of a certain area, which is, by its authenticity and tourist attractiveness, unique and different from all others. In this context, this paper focuses on the gist of ethno-tourist animation, i.e. the character and the content of ethno-animation programs whose realization is aimed at fulfilling interests, meeting needs and wishes of tourists who have opted for ethno-tourism. Ethno-animation programs, prepared by professionals – tourist animators, or by local population, including first some available ethno-capacities and potential (ethno-villages, ethno-households, ethno-restaurants, ethno-workshops, ethno-fairs and other ethno-events) should contribute to instigating ethno-social motives presented at various ethno manifestations, e.g. in folk art, folk costumes, customs and festivities, and particularly, through some significant traits of the local population (hospitality, kindness, amiability), disclosed in communication when meeting directly with ethno-tourists. A well designed ethno-animation may have some significant economic effects, but also even more than that. Ethno-animation, with its cognitive, spiritually-cultural, psychological and humanistic function, contributes directly to creating unforgettable experiences of tourists, and in that way also to sustainable development of ethno-tourism, the quality of anthropogenic values and respect for cultural and identity hallmarks of their own and of others.*

**Key words:** *tourist animation, ethno-animation, ethno-tourism, ethno-villages, ethno-events, Serbia.*

### Introduction

Modern tourism is increasingly turning to its numerous and various selective forms, and particularly to ethno-tourism, as one of most significant and specific forms of tourism, which can contribute to the economic and cultural development of the local community in the manner that can bring tradition back to life (Hadžić et al., 2005). Ethno-tourism is the travelling mainly motivated by demand for authentic and sometimes even close contacts

with people whose ethnic and cultural base differs from that of tourists (Weiler & Hall, 1984). Local population is directly involved in ethno-tourist activities, mainly by presenting their traditional culture as the essential attraction (Hinch & Butler, 1996).

Actualization of ethno-tourism is the result of the increased interest of modern tourists in traditional folklore, material and spiritual folklore which, by its authenticity and tourist attractiveness, is unique for each nation and different from all others. Due to this, ethno-tourist animation, as a structural element of modern ethno-tourist offer, becomes significant when appears as an authentic form of tourist animation.

Modern tourism trends indicate that the tourist demand is created by the tourists themselves, above all by those coming from developed countries. When fitting into the new tourist ambience, together with local tourists, they actuate the idea on the need to preserve the local culture and its material and non-material traces (Deacon et al., 2004). As well as, in accordance with their needs and desires, they point to issues related to local culture and communities, and they significantly contribute to creating opportunities for their adequate resolution in the context of accelerated globalization process. In that sense, the ethno-tourist animation, with its program orientation and offer of obtainable ethno-capacities (ethno-houses, ethno-households, ethno-villages, ethno-events, etc.), should take the role of presenting traditional and authentic cultural values and contents aimed at harmonizing what is local with the global. In that way, with its authentic function and quality, by suppressing the cultural unification dimension of globalization, the ethno-tourist animation significantly contributes to connecting globalization and localization, as well as to promoting the wealth of pluralism in the traditional ethno-cultural contents (O’Riordan, 2001).

The objective of this paper is the essence and the content of ethno-tourist animation, as a key element of modern tourist offer (Đorđević, 2012a), aimed at developing ethno-tourism. The method of analyzing the content, and also the basic logical methods (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, abstraction and generalization) have been used while preparing this paper.

### **Ethno-capacities and potentials of Serbia – ethno-animation program basis**

Programs of ethno-animation are intended to tourists interested in ethno-tourism, that is, in traveling to those natural areas rich with ethno-capacities and various ethno-potentials, with the basic goal to become familiar, through pleasant experiences, with traditional cultures of certain tourist places, their ethno-households, ethno-houses, ethno-restaurants, and ethno-events.

Within this aim, the ethno-animation needs, among other things, to contribute activating tourist ethno-social motives presented at festivals, concerts and while making souvenirs and objects for everyday use; then, through the folk

art, folk costumes, customs and festivities, and particularly, through some significant traits of the local population (hospitality, kindness, amiability), disclosed in communication when meeting directly with ethno-tourists.

In some sense and in certain aspect, everything the people are experiencing and will be experiencing in the future is rooted in the past so that the past, the present and the future are closely connected categories. In that sense, for example the “ethno”-houses speak about their own time limits, as an expression of local believes what needs to be considered the structure and framework of their identity. The emergence of ethno-houses and ethno-spaces originates in the need to (re-) build the identity, what corresponds to the process of (re-) building the national identity, appearing as an acute response to the identity crisis generated by the globalization processes (Appadurai 2001, Gavrilović, 2008). Rapid changes in recent decades affected every village and led them to the state beyond recognition not only in their appearance but also in the way of life of the people who stayed to live in them. Villages have new shapes in the spatially-structural, but also in the hierarchical and communicational sense. The houses themselves have changed, and also their appearance, inventory and space organization. The way of doing business has also been altered, especially in agriculture, and it is marked with material inventory and technology. All these changes are willingly accepted because they mean increased production, better economic position and more comfortable everyday life. They have also caused abandoning the traditional and adopting modern life concepts, as accumulated personal choices (Gavrilović, 2008). In that manner the base for strengthening tourism has been created, especially of the ethno-tourism, as the result of richer tourist offer, also including the programs of ethno-tourist animation as an integral part of this offer.

There is a high ethno-potential in Serbia nowadays which has become “magnet” for potential tourists interested in staying in ethno-regions. The ethno-potential is represented in numerous ethno-villages (e.g. an ethno-village Troška at the bank of the Mlava River, near Žagubica; an ethno-village Gučevo Vajati; an ethno-village Sirogojno in Zlatibor Mt.; then an ethno-village Drvengrad in Mokra Gora; ethno village Rogljevske Timnice near Negotin; ethno-village Tiganjica in Banat; standard farmsteads in Vojvodina, the Zornić’s house in Bačevac, in the neighborhood of Barajevo, some 30 km from Belgrade down the Ibar Highway towards Central Šumadija, etc.); after that there are ethno-fairs (e.g. in Rajac, the largest manifestation of this type by the number of visitors), and other various ethno-events; ethno-households; ethno-restaurants; ethno-workshops; etc. Exactly this ethno-potential determines which type of the ethno-tourist animation program should be prepared by professional animators and animation groups, but also by every host who receives tourists, striving to fulfill their needs and desires. When talking about tourist animators, as professional experts, Serbia is lagging behind many developed countries with tourist animators, but also in the education system

that allows training of such specialists at academic level. There are some significant results achieved by the Novi Sad University School of Natural Sciences, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hospitality, which has a working group for ethno-tourism and animation in tourism that for years has been carrying out adequate research with an emphasis on the possibility of using folklore heritage in the tourist offer of certain ethno-destination, primarily in Vojvodina, and beyond. Of course, this does not exclude the need for all institutions responsible for tourism, both local and central authorities, to do everything so that the rural population, personified as hosts dealing with ethno-tourism, is educated for animation as a part of the ethno-tourist activity, i.e. for adequate presentation of all traditional folk art achievements.

In current market economy conditions, tourist products of an ethno-area (souvenirs, various decorations and objects for everyday use, customs, diverse ethno-cultural events), are constantly exposed to the danger of being commercialized. Guests, especially those coming from developed countries, turn the local culture into a consumer product, which may have a negative effect on ethno-tourism development. Therefore, it is necessary for the local population to be involved to the maximum in the decision making process regarding the scope and type of tourism; the population personified as educated hosts, capable of creating the most favorable conditions for the ethno-tourism not to be destroyed or the local culture degraded but to stimulate it in a dynamic manner with preserving the identity and authenticity. Of course, for achieving realistic results in that field, higher involvement of state authorities at the national level is required, including tourist agencies and private entities, to help local communities to make the tourist industry development, and especially its ethno-tourist dimension, sustainable (Robinson, 2000).

### **Ethno-animation aimed at sustainable development of ethno-tourism**

The concept of sustainable development of tourism, applied even back in 1970s (Meadows et al., 1972), today has become topical, above all due to violation of natural environment and its negative influence on tourism (Sutawa, 2012; Amir et al., 2015). Besides that, the topicality of the sustainable tourism development concept also lay down the issue of harmonizing the tourism development with the requirements of preservation of natural and anthropogenic resources and values (Gartner, 1996).

More favorable conditions have been established by the development of selective forms of tourism (ethno-tourism, cultural tourism, rural tourism, eco-tourism, etc.) narrowing the space for mass tourism, to suppress uncontrollable and excessive tourism development, which is leading to creating pseudo-values and non-tolerant commercialization of authentic culture, degrading itself and undermining the essence of its existence. It has shown, as rightly emphasized by some authors, that the objective of sustainable development is not only in

providing economic benefits but also in creating better living conditions for members of the social community. In that context, they claim that the scope of economic growth is not as significant as the distribution of results (Grudney et al., 2008). Such cognitions can be practically verified just through various selective forms of tourism, and especially in ethno-tourism and ethno-tourism animation. In accordance to this, the local population has to be informed and convinced in the benefits of ethno-tourism development, before any kind of progress can be made regarding sustainability (Miller, 2001). It basically means improving the well-being of the local population but also preserving the natural and enriching the national art treasures of a certain ethno-area for the future generations and its presentation to ethno-tourists in its authentic form, which reflects individual and social identity of the given area, established on the fundamental traditional values (Ritchie & Crouch, 2005). In this context, the inclinations need to be directed towards harmonizing sustainable development with positive spiritual-cultural effects, when their mutual balance, secured by implementing the ethno-tourist animation program, should under no condition jeopardize local values of a certain community.

In the context of relationship between sustainable tourism and ethno-tourism, as its selective form, the tourist ethno-animation needs to protect the principles of sustainable tourism, and, on the other hand, to create a basis for creating space for the tourists themselves to make real their pluralistic concept of perception and understanding the realization of their needs and wishes (Đorđević, 2013). According to some authors, the ethno-tourism can be auto-destructive due to the possibility that the presence of tourists, especially those foreign, may spoil the authenticity of local culture, since the products of material and spiritual culture (folk costumes, artifacts, and ceremonies...) become commodities sold at tourist market, reducing in that way its function exclusively to the economic dimension. In that way, the foreign tourists coming from the economically developed countries turn local cultures into the consumer products, which can disrupt the sustainability of ethno-tourism at the ethno-sites (Pavlović & Jovanović, 2009). However, it can be said the opinion that ethno-tourism does not destroy the local culture prevails. On the contrary, it stimulates, in a dynamic manner, it promotes harmonization and mutual cooperation, the respect for the uniqueness and the diversity of traditions of nations boost cooperation between developed and developing countries, which is important for overcoming economic, social, cultural, and technological differences. In this sense, the cooperation with the local population represents a base for the promotion of ethno-tourism, especially because the recent practice has shown that this practice was insufficient and mainly referred to the agreement on economic and not on spiritual, cultural and humanistic effects which make the ethno-tourism sustainable to the maximum possible extent.

### **Character and specific features of ethno-tourist animation programs**

Specific features of ethno-tourist animation programs derive from the peculiarity of ethno-tourism, as a selective form of tourism, which is most closely connected to the rural, cultural and eco-tourism. Complementariness of this tourism forms is of great importance for the revitalization of rural areas which, with their ethnographic wealth, i.e. authentic folk creativity, are increasingly becoming attractive tourist destinations, not only to foreign but to local tourists as well.

Being the main part of ethno-tourist offer, the ethno-animation programs does not have only the economic dimension, since they contribute to the increase of economic effects in tourism, but the wider cultural-humanistic dimension which can often be even more significant than the economic because it contributes to more substantial tourist visit, greater popularity of ethno-tourist destinations and increased satisfaction of tourists.

Ethno-tourists are motivated by the search for exotic experiences, as well as for artifacts and other products or services (Yang, 2007). They want to learn about folklore heritage of one nation, that is, individual local communities, their tradition, material and spiritual creative works, starting from architecture (traditional architecture), over spiritual and cultural achievements (authentic music, painting, sculpturing, folk costumes...), to the achievements of their technical culture, expressed dominantly in old national crafts. Starting from entire ethnographic wealth, in accordance with the tourist demand, the ethno-animation tourist programs need to take the part not only of presenting authentic material and cultural values and contents, but also the role of creative approach of tourists, as active participants in the process of realizing ethno-animation programs. Opportunities for such a presentation are enormous. Numerous local communities, for example, could organize local presentations with presenters dressed in traditional folk costumes, made in specialized authentic local workshops, providing tourists with an exclusive opportunity to participate actively in making the costumes, and among the tourists there might be those who would like to take home a piece of a folk costume as a precious souvenir that will remind them of pleasant experiences during their stay at the ethno-tourist site.

Ethno-animation programs, which stimulate participation of tourists, can be highly diversified, either it is about passive or active participation of tourists in their realization and creation. Passive participation becomes obvious when tourists are spectators of the offered program (e.g. when watching the performance of folk dance assemblies, attending a specific music program, or exhibitions organized in traditional local houses, etc.). However, active participation of tourists becomes prominent when they appear as active participants. For example, when they get actively involved in making various traditional instruments that can be made for a short time (flutes, instruments

made of pumpkin...); or in making simple parts of folk costumes (webbings, embroidered towels, knitting...); or in music programs involving competition with eventual awards; or in various folk dances, as traditional games of competition which provide an opportunity for “real experiences,” especially if those games are organized in traditional ambience outdoors; or at the folk fairs, gatherings and during church holidays, with a possibility of getting to know and participating in various customs and custom actions, etc. (Ivkov, 2012).

Folk national dances should be particularly emphasized because the participants, including the tourists, perform them in folk costumes. They are a significant element of cultural feature of the animation since, besides the active participation, they instigate imagination and interpersonal communication (Đorđević, 2014). It is not at all accidental that the majority of current animation-tourist activities, ranging from sports and recreational to cultural and artistic, are executed through contests. Using such opportunities by the tourists should lead most of individuals or groups, after ending their stay in an ethno-village, i.e. an ethno-household, simply to say, “*We are coming next year again, it has been unforgettable!*” (Đorđević, 2012b).

With this aim in mind, it is a great obligation of animators and animation groups, and especially all members of ethno-households in ethno-villages, to create such animation programs whose execution would contribute to providing a higher level of satisfaction of the tourists, as a major source of attracting and retaining them. Thereby, in modern conditions, retaining permanent (loyal) tourists is a priority, because it is more profitable than finding new tourists-consumers. This fact has long been neglected in the tourist-catering practice since it has been thought that the main goal of doing business is permanent search for new guests. Of course, attracting new guests remains a dominant task of the tourist-catering entities, but it is a fact that without prior securing an appropriate degree of satisfaction of tourists, not only retaining permanent guests but attracting new ones as well, cannot be expected.

## **Conclusion**

Conditions for the ethno-tourism development in Serbia are exceptional due to enormous ethno-tourist potentials, and all elements of ethno-tourist offer, including the ethno-tourist animation as a specific form of ethno animation as well, have to be well prepared and thought-out. Thereby, the ethno-tourist animation has a special place, because the achievement of its goals does not rest only on economic effects, but it goes even further: considering the provision of unforgettable experiences of tourists, anthropogenic values, paying respect to their own and other people’s culture and identity, respecting the uniqueness and diversity of nation’s traditions, of sustainable development of ethno-tourism, suppressing negative effects of commercialization at ethno-tourist market, establishing negative attitude towards tendencies of cultural

unification by some developed countries in the global world, and harmonizing what is local with the global, etc.

With this aim, starting from the whole ethnographic wealth, and in line with the tourist demand, i.e. the needs and wishes of tourists, the ethno-tourist animation programs need to play the role not only in the presentation of authentic material and cultural values and contents, but also the role of enabling a creative approach of ethno-tourists, as active participants in the process of achieving ethno-animation programs, since the possibilities for such participation are enormous (making simple pieces of folk costumes or various traditional instruments; participation in music programs; in various custom activities then in various folklore games, as traditional games of contest; etc.).

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