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Protecting the Past for Today: Development of Georgia's Heritage Tourism

Keywords: cultural heritage, tourism, Georgia, preservation, authenticity, cuisine.

Abstract: Tourism, one of the most relevant industries worldwide, plays a key role in the development and competitiveness of many regions. Despite the increasing debate in literature on cultural heritage- and tourism-based institutions for regional competitiveness, the relation between cultural heritage and competitiveness remains vastly unexplored, especially with respect to the mediating role played by tourism. The aim of the presented paper is to explore the relationships that exist between the tourism and cultural heritage management sector in Georgia. To this purpose, the paper builds on several interviews with both authorities as well as field experts. This is followed with a discussion on how notions of authenticity and commodification are regarded by key players through the staging of particular types of Georgian tourism deeply implanted into cultural heritage. The issue of employing cultural heritage (as tangible as intangible) in tourism is very relevant in Georgia, because it implies the protection and popularization of cultural heritage in the country on the one hand, and the development of cultural tourism through widely including its best “patterns” in tourism product on the other. This research shows that Georgia lacks effective heritage governance. The researcher suggests that the main tasks the tourism sector should perform in Georgia are to contribute to the identification of cultural heritage, to protect and maintain it through development of tourism. The essential prerequisite for quality tourism is well-preserved material and immaterial cultural heritage. The results of the research will help the State leaders and municipal policy-makers understand the advantages and successful development of institutional linkages where tourism is in synergy with the cultural heritage sector, as means of achieving regional competitiveness.

Introduction

Georgia's rich cultural heritage is the foundation for cultural tourism development and innovative national tourism product creation. This is intensified by the strong culture of hospitality – traditionally formed and woven in the Georgian gene – which is a significant integral part of Georgian culture. The existing phenomenon is a basic element for local and foreign tourists interested in cultural tourism.

Even a superficial reading of tourism policy documents originated from national and regional governments across Europe in the last 15 years would soon persuade us that heritage tourism is a leading “new” area of tourism demand, which practically all policy-makers are now apprehensive of and enthusiastic to develop. Therefore, the aim of this article is to present the potential of Georgia's cultural heritage in the era of tourism industry by preserving its authenticity, to identify those threats and problems standing with preservation and recognition it is facing and eventually, find the reasons behind these dilemmas.

Today, the term “heritage” is applied in a confusingly wide range of contexts. At its simplest, heritage signifies “anything that has been inherited” [Aitchison et al., 2014]. In many ways, the expansion of the concept has demonstrated the changing attitudes to the past endured by following generations. As a social phenomenon, cultural heritage is highly contemplative of the society in which it is produced and valued. From the private

albums and memorabilia to family inheritance and traditions, from the conventional narration of historical happenings to the performative expression and materialization of a breathing connection to land - heritage today is about far more than museum monuments and historical buildings, and how they are to be sustained and publicized. It is about the making our memories comprehended and developing the sense of identity through mutual and repeated communications with the tangible leftovers and living remains of a shared past [Giaccardi 2012].

New unexplored areas and new scales are foreshadowed for heritage practice, which set no frontiers or limits to what heritage can be and how is to be projected. At the basis, there is a definition of heritage practice that concentrates not just on the protection of the material and temporal fabric of heritage but more substantially on “the management of change” [Fairclough 2009]: the use of heritage in a wider cultural, social and political context to express and produce “continually evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and tradition”(Council of Europe 2005, from Art. 2).

The evolution of heritage as a present-day cultural construction is a part of the enlargement of the tourism industry, but it must also be regarded within the wider context of developments in cultural production and consumption [Aitchison et al. 2014]. Presently, many countries promote wisely scripted versions of their cultural and historic inheritance, and display those invented stories through their legendary sites of tourism [Hobsbawm & Ranger 2012]. Hence, the heritage tourism, as a part of the wider category of “cultural tourism”, is now one of the main pillars of the tourism strategy of the European Commission (2015-2020).

Georgia, as a signatory country (2007) to the Convention (Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO), shares the provisions contained therein. Moreover, the issue about protection of the country’s intangible heritage (folklore, traditions, customs...) has become substantial as yet from the 19th century [Topchishvili 2010]. Georgian society has preserved to date a variety of intangible cultural heritage, which is at the same time, largely documented and studied by scientists. The term "cultural tourism" in Georgia was adopted for the first time on the official level by the resolution “On tourism and resorts development activities of Georgia” of the President of Georgia in February, 1998 [Japaridze 2008].

Tourism is identified more and more as an instrument of social and cultural change and an environmentally and socially-friendly form of tourism, especially for native communities. In many cases, tourism has been recognized as both a power for cultural improvement or revitalization and the loss of cultural integrity. Cultural heritage tourism has manifested this trend, becoming more entrepreneurial and entertainment-oriented [Richter 2005]. Correspondingly, this article attempts to take a precise Georgian perspective to the issue of heritage tourism development. Utilizing the data on the consumption of heritage tourism in Georgia, an analysis is made of the form and causes of its growth.

Georgian culture is ancient and forms the backbone of the world civilization [Judy 2008]. After regaining its independence, Georgia now has the opportunity to fully reveal the spiritual and intellectual potential of the Georgian nation, considering today's political realities. There is a great opportunity for Georgian culture to re-establish itself after many centuries as a significant contributor in the world cultural processes.

Heritage Tourism Characteristics, Consumption, Commodification

Heritage tourism studies evidently deal with a wide variety of different themes. They generally embrace the analysis of artefacts, landscapes, museums, and activities that focus on representing various aspects of the past and also the present. There are beliefs which attempt to explain the ongoing expansion in heritage tourism. It claims that in the current era of globalized uncertainty, heritage tourism offers a degree of security and stability

[Hewison 1987; Wright 2009]. A second belief is concentrated on MacCannell's (1992) idea of "staged authenticity". This concerns the fabricated or reinvention of sites as if they are authentic. He explains that the tourist is in search of the real seeing while everyday life is saturated with contrivance [MacCannell 1992].

Alternative tourism, on the other hand, is seen as journeys into "unexplored territory beyond the limits of the 'tourist space', to have 'authentic' experiences" [Cohen 2004]. When Georgian heritage tourism is examined, it becomes apparent that authenticity can be projected in this way. However, more often than not, tourists are being caught in a trap away from local life; alternative tourism can be established whereby Georgian heritage tourism becomes integrated into everyday local life. It is undoubtedly true that Georgia has been of great interest in all epochs and has been long intriguing and captivating foreign travellers with its fascinating landscapes, geographical location, the rare combined climate of the sea and mountains, historical, architectural and natural monuments, authentic hospitality and traditions.

The next subject concerns concepts of authenticity with commodification processes. Watson and Kopachevsky claimed that "modern tourism is best recognized in the context of the commodification process and modern consumer culture" [Watson & Kopachevsky 1994]. Actually, much of the recent debates encircling the tourism issue have centred on the nature of tourism consumption and the commodities that tourists consume. Thus, it is one of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture of Georgia to demonstrate the economic capabilities of cultural resources and adopt it in terms of encouraging sustainable development of tourism; tourism marketing as well as the importance of different cultural resources and their expansion to tourism development [The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia 2016].

As Cohen specifies, authenticity is negotiable. For some tourists, the commercial reproduction of the past may be good enough as an authentic product [Cohen 2004]. MacDonald identifies that rather than considering heritage tourism simply as something established from outside a community, it can also be understood as something which is being actively used to cultivate local culture and reinforce a pride which intensifies the traditional phenomena rather than diminishing it [Macdonald 1997].

However, despite the growing influence of global regulatory bodies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and the World Monument Fund (WMF), it is in the local circumstances that heritage is interconnected with, interpreted, represented, and intertwined into the structure of daily life of those communities that dwell within the surroundings [Long 2000]. Considering groups and communities who are increasingly aware of the symbolic prominence of their representation in heritage sites, interest group activities have to be focused on issues of what is saved, destroyed, and interpreted [Richter 2005]. Public-private partnership promotion with regard to develop cultural tourism (e.g. work out legislative initiatives, partnership schemes, support cultural events of national importance, and participation in support programmes of international donors, etc.) would be beneficial.

The Study and Methods

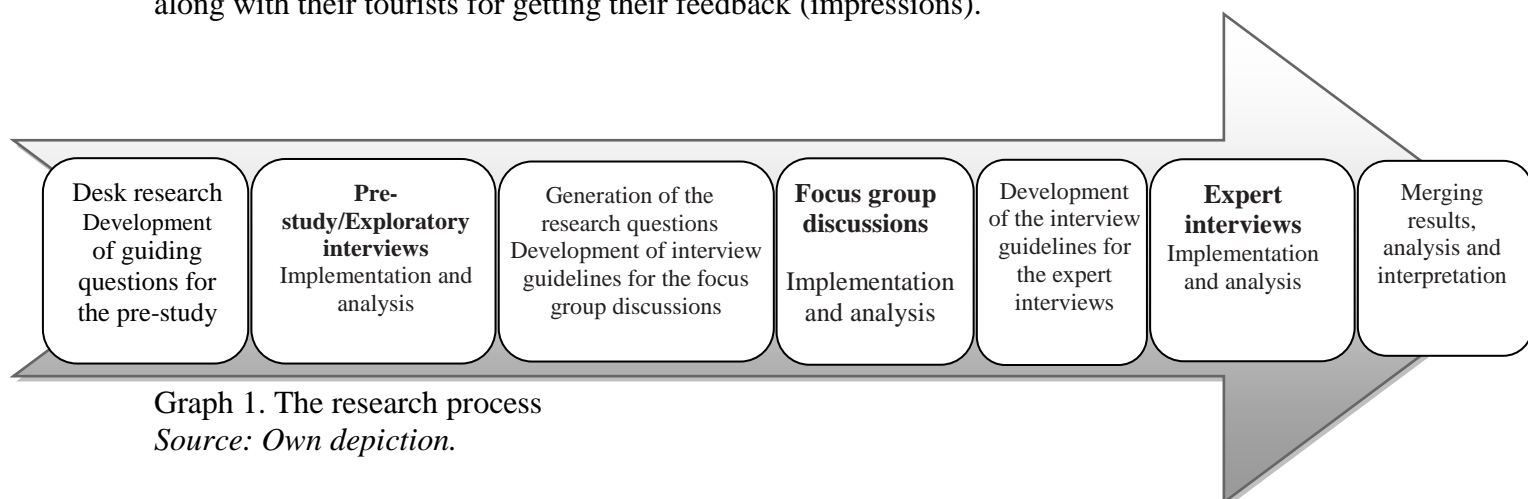
The problem of exploiting intangible cultural heritage (as well as tangible cultural heritage) in Georgia is more and more urgent, because, firstly, it suggests preservation and popularization of cultural heritage in the country, and secondly it incorporates all the best samples into the tourism product and based on these will enhance the development of cultural tourism. Both of them have an important socio-economic meaning.

The study sought to identify *inter alia* the possible relationships that exist between tourism and cultural heritage management sector in Georgia. A qualitative framework was adopted for this exploratory study. The qualitative approach is a detailed study of events. This approach allows to embed research results into the context. The research design, methods and tools evolve within the course of the research project and may be flexibly adjusted [Creswell 2012]. According to Schreier [2012] the adjustment of tools during a research process is important for the success of a qualitative research project. The research process of the present study is depicted in *Graph 1* below.

The analysis is mainly based on in-depth interviews via semi-structured, open-ended questionnaires. The interviews were conducted between February 2017 and September 2017 with the Chiefs of the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia (MoCMP) and Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA), along with a representative from The Biological Farming Association Elkana and the Agricultural Projects Management Agency (APMA). Desk research also was employed, analyzing different scientific publications on the subject, along with websites' examination for collecting information how precise they are when it comes to the updated information, as an auxiliary component of data collection in order to fill information gaps on the quality of local cultural tourism. In addition, a large amount of data from historical records and previous research compilations available was analyzed.

The exploratory face-to-face interviews based on open guiding questions were conducted with those actors who set the agenda for cultural heritage and tourism in a Georgian context, and the Georgian perspective is also seen within an international context. A wide range of documents have been studied: documents presenting the actors in a general way (strategic plans, annual reports, etc.), documents focusing especially on the link between tourism and cultural heritage (campaign material, project reports). Most of the texts are from 2015 until today, but several documents coming from the 2000s are included.

The author participated in tours in person, lasting from a day to one week and benefited from this opportunity to make notes about the quality of expeditions and to interview guides along with their tourists for getting their feedback (impressions).



Graph 1. The research process

Source: Own depiction.

The results I present in the following sections will be based on citations of the interviewees from the expert interviews (*in italics*). As neither the interviewees, nor the interviewer are native speakers of English, linguistic errors may occur as well as the use of different terminologies. To stay close to the original statements, such errors have not been corrected.

Culture and Heritage

Culture is a social inheritance that gives structure to our lives. This is another way of saying that our future is our past or that there is no future without a past. Hoffman [2006]

argues that if culture includes within itself long-lasting human possibilities then it is mandatory to promote it, identify with it and stimulate socialization into it; under other conditions they are, actually, not the memorials we expect them to be: the manifestation of the link of culture with morality and of the present with the future. The most prevalent definition is that it is an unlimited way of life of a given people in a society.

A central problem in studying cultural consumption is the wide range of scope of meanings implied by the term "culture". Tomlinson remarks that hundreds of definitions of culture exist, "which would indicate that either there is a reasonable amount of disorientation ... or that 'culture' is so large and all-encompassing concept that it can accommodate all these definitions" [Tomlinson 1991]. There is a sense of culture as a whole, which provides an organizing concept for the widely varied "ways of life". Trying to explain culture in a single widely acceptable definition provides a level of generalization that makes the act of definition pointless.

The solution proposed by Tomlinson and others [Westney 2016] is not to seek an all-inclusive definition of what culture is, but rather to focus on the way in which the term is actually employed. Williams (2014) classifies three wide categories of modern application of the term: as a general process of intellectual, spiritual and creative development; as suggestive of a particular "way of life"; and as the products and practices of intellectual and artistic activity [Williams, 2014].

A brief look at the history of tourism consumption displays that the emphasis of application has changed over time, away from the process of development symbolized by the Grand Tour towards the last two categories [Towner 1985]. Westney [2016] defines these remaining two basic uses of the term culture in the academic literature termed as "culture as process" and "culture as product".

Culture as process is an approach evolved from anthropology and sociology, which considers it mainly as methods of management fixed in a specific social group [McKercher & Du Cros 2012]. Culture is seen as the product of individual or group activities to which particular meanings are connected. Generally, the two meanings of culture are closely interlinked. In recent years, however, there has been serious concern expressed about the commodification of culture [James 2014]. Tourism particularly has been recognized as a main force for commodification.

There is no ambiguity that the existence of tourists often generates the creation of cultural manifestations especially for tourism consumption; this produces a unique challenge to heritage conservators and managers, who have long had to do with crowds of tourists vandalizing places of historic importance [Cohen 2004]. Cohen continues stating that some cultural products developed for tourists may display "emergent authenticity", and be accepted as "authentic" by both tourists and cultural producers alike. There are some reasons why heritage has to be preserved. These comprise opposing the effects of modernization, preserving common nostalgia, safeguarding artistic and aesthetic values, improving science and education, keeping up environmental diversity, and producing economic value [Timothy & Boyd 2006]. While commodification and concern for authenticity does usually take place in European heritage tourism, the culture in Georgia is accessible to everyone and the diversity of cultural expressions is generally preserved.

Cultural heritage is keeping traditions alive and is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values, without it we will lose our main source of self-expression and in the end our self-realization. It is defined as the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.

Looking for Something Real: The Need to Conserve the Past?

Evidence from Georgia

The article discusses Georgia's rich potential resources of cultural heritage tourism which were not investigated extensively for the last years. As one of the principle objectives of cultural heritage tourism is collaboration with local organizations and the public to develop sustainable economies. As far as it is understood tourism creates jobs, offers new business opportunities, and strengthens local economies [Devidze & Gigauri 2015]. It protects natural and cultural resources, which improve the quality of life for residents and travellers who participate in the services and attractions. It is the trigger for income generation, increased income has direct effect on local and regional life level, besides heritage tourism promotes community pride by allowing people to work together to enhance economic and cultural development through distinct community opportunities.

Georgia is the country of ancient culture, whose history consists of the earliest stages of human development. The first trace of human existence in the territory of Georgia is found in the area of Dmanisi and dates back to 1.8 m years [Topchishvili 2010]. Archaeological excavations have revealed the material remains of the rich and varied culture of the Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Hellenistic and Late Antique Period: settlement, palaces, and tombs, unique artefacts of gold, silver, bronze and pottery.

The culture of the pre-Christian era had become deeply rooted in creative thinking of those people living on the territory of Georgia and had created a powerful charge of cultural tradition which extremely conditioned the original and unique look of further centuries of Georgian art [Japaridze 2008]. The unique nature of Georgian arts and culture and authentic character of its heritage define the country's international image and are crucial for the development of the society.

Especially the medieval Christian culture has preserved a particularly large number of high-profile artistic monuments [Kvaratskhelia 2009]. There, in high mountains and cozy gorges, in big towns and dense forests tens of thousands of churches and monasteries and fortresses are conserved.

From early Georgians, living in the shadows of the mighty Caucasus Mountains, to the Ancient Greek myth of Jason and the Argonauts search for the Golden Fleece, the Kings and Queen that converted Georgia to Christianity in the 4th century AD, the events of the 20th and 21st centuries, Georgia has a fascinating story to tell [Surguladze 2003]. When tourists visit Georgian ancient cave cities, marvel at the highest settlements in Europe or experience the sights and sounds of amazing theatre, food, arts, wine and music, Georgia captures a place in hearts forever.

An important aspect of Georgian culture is music, namely, church hymns and folk songs that are distinguished by their difficult polyphonic nature and are still relevant to Georgians' lives. In all parts of the country, especially in the highlands, the rich folklore and traditions of the crafts are maintained.

There are also rich centuries-old traditions of the Georgian folk craft development as well; handmade creations are an integral part of Georgia's cultural heritage too. Each of its field – knitting, ceramics, woodcarving, jewellery items – is distinguished with different and varied techniques. The final product of traditional craft is material, however, since the craft and craftsmanship are related to knowledge and skills that is transmitted from generations to generations, it is all about the intangible skills and knowledge and not a specific pattern.

Globalization jeopardizes several sectors of intangible cultural heritage as well as traditions of local crafts. Handmade crafts often cannot compete with the factory produced cheap massive production that, in turn, poses a danger of loss to some traditions. The role of the Parliament in this regard is highly important to better develop Georgia's cultural heritage. By means of this, strengthening of the legislative space and the process

of implementation of those requirements in the ratified international documents would effectively be managed.

If we take into consideration the historical-geographical conditions of Georgia, we will see that in almost every corner, especially in depopulated areas, it is possible to properly plan and organize many happenings that will help attract local or foreign visitors and, therefore, understand the country's history. These events can also encourage in revival of the forgotten traditions.

Preliminary Results and Discussions

The future experience of Georgia will create a reference point for finding out how tourism and cultural heritage may engage in an efficient course of action for regional competitiveness and thus prosperity, according to the official National Cultural strategy. In that case, the national identity and cultural heritage industry supports the creation of a new form of tourism centre where leading enterprises in the industry, craftsmen, tourism organizations, State institutions and cultural organizations (e.g. museums) are beneficially attached together in a self-reinforcing mechanisms of competitiveness nurtured by tourism flows.

Bottlenecks of Georgian Heritage Protection

In the State Register of Cultural Heritage Immovable Monuments of Georgia there are 6 803 monuments included, from where 484 are the monuments of national importance. In the list of World Heritage 3 objects are enlisted from Georgia. Just from 2012 the intangible heritage of Georgia is being inventoried [Euro East Culture 2014].

According to the one of the respondents from the Ministry, *the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia is the adopter of the State Policy concerning the heritage protection in the country but it does not possess officially declared vision, mission, so called "White paper", or any kind of policy document that would be the fundament of Heritage Protection Strategy. In 2013 the concept of cultural policy was developed by expert group organized by the Ministry.*

As the international experience shows, proper management of cultural heritage is impossible without creating appropriate conditions (enhancing authority and responsibility; provision of material, financial, human and informational resources) in local self-governments. Those local self-governments should be one of the most important sources of registration, protection and promotion of cultural heritage sites as they are better aware of the problematic situation in those subordinated areas. In connection with this, the Ministry of Culture is going to enforce inter-regional collaboration and support joint initiatives by encouraging participation of the inhabitants of the regions in cultural activities in different regions, in order to foster human resources employed in culture and to promote their work (performances, exhibitions, crafts, etc.) on the national level.

As the respondent from the Ministry continues, *all the challenges in the field of cultural heritage lead to the fundamental problem – unawareness of heritage values. To efficiently maintain the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Georgia it is essential for wider society to be informed about the issues related to heritage protection. The role of media is crucially important to provide information to the society about the benefits of heritage conservation and threats faced by heritage.*

The subject for common concern is also intangible cultural heritage which is slowly being consigned to oblivion. A substantial part of the population does not have any idea about the indigenous Georgian traditions, old games, public holidays, directions of Georgian martial arts, etc. In accordance with the culture strategy for 2025 [2016] *intangible cultural heritage should be protected, revitalisation and practicing of endangered forms of intangible cultural*

heritage (oral traditions and expressions, traditional craftsmanship, performing arts, social practices, knowledge, etc.) must be facilitated and public's awareness raised about it.

Cultural Heritage with its divergent values is an inexhaustible resource of social and economic development. The social and economic potential of heritage is the basis for the country's advancement and harmonious development of society. For that reason, it is needed to study, demonstrate and protect the territorial and typological diversity of cultural heritage of Georgia on the basis of inter-agency cooperation. One of the expert respondents brought an example about Norway; he stated that, *in response to reforms in Norway, 2013, the identification of heritage sectoral values was carried out by the relevant agencies in different sectors, resulting in establishment of the National Heritage Protection Plan for each specific field, led by the appropriate ministries.*

As already noted above, commodification is an issue that is closely tied to the concept of authenticity. When unbridled, it is generally perceived as negative and something that devalues an experience or cultural activity. As a process, it shifts things that were formerly thought of as freely available to the local community into an economic domain where exchange value is overt and exclusions are set in. As it is further argued [Macdonald 1997], linking the community with commercialism can be seen as a negative commodification process, but it can also give a culture a new strength and legitimacy. The representative from the MoCMP stated about the issue that, *the commodification process of living cultures created certain threats. When transforming the tourist product with cultural heritage elements, the balance should be kept in order to not to cause an excessive commercialization by aspirations for profit.* At the same time, the Elkana association representative further commented that, *when we talk about tourists who want to buy some souvenirs, it is necessary to be strictly specified in the Law of Georgia which speaks about the "Export and Import of cultural values from/to the country" whether which kind of "patterns" require a special permit before getting them out of the country, in order to avoid any misunderstandings*".

Thus and so, sharing of international experience, strengthening the role of the local society in the management of cultural heritage, reawakening and utilization of the volunteer institution for the purpose of providing daily care – all of these will pave the viable way of heritage protection and will create a "heritage protection culture".

Cuisine as a part of the Georgian Cultural Heritage Tourism

The peculiarities of Georgian cuisine - this is a result of past experiences and synthesis with other cultures. Thus, agriculture has emerged in this way too. From ancient times agriculture has played a central role in Georgia, and to this day it remains one of the most promising sectors of Georgia's economy. Forty-four percent of Georgia's total area is regarded to be agricultural [GeoStat, 2017]. Georgia's diverse climatic conditions and natural resource "gift" allow production of a wide variety of agricultural products and favour the competitive development of the sector. Agriculture, except being vital for economic advancement, is an essential component of Georgian culture – no agriculture means no cuisine – agriculture plays a crucial role in keeping the beautiful landscapes of this country alive which constitute the major assets that tourists appreciate and value when arriving to Georgia.

Based on the GeoStat's survey data, 35 % of international visitors travel to Georgia to tasting/sample the local cuisine and wine [GeoStat, 2016]. Georgia prides itself on the oldest, continuous, perpetual traditions of winemaking in the world which goes back 8,000 years. In fact it is said to be the birthplace of wine [Gurushidze et al., 2014]. As reported by the representative from APMA, *over 500 aboriginal grape varieties are still cultivated here. After many centuries of refining the tradition, it is not surprising that Georgian wines - Saperavi, Tsinandali, Mukuzani, Teliani, Napareuli - are exquisite. Winemaking continues being a vital part of Georgian culture and national identity.* Georgian families across

the country grow their own grapes and produce wine in the old-fashioned way, by locating grape juice in underground clay jars (Kvevri), covered with a wooden lid, protected and sealed with earth, to ferment during the winter.

The process of implementation of the Faro Convention (Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 2005) started in 2011, consequently, the oldest, traditional Georgian "method of Kvevri wine making" took its honourable place in the UNESCO World Heritage List in December, 2013. Prior to that, in 2001, it was "Georgian Polyphony" which was named among the 19 valuable monuments in the UNESCO's "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity".

GNTA representative further comments that *the Georgian wine tourism market is still in its infancy. However, harmonized effort from wine makers, tour operators, and Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA), including the development of infrastructure, will be necessary to construct Georgia's rich legacy into a product that can compete on the global wine tourism market. There are a small quantity of 'chateaus'-type wineries that provide to wine tourists with a savoury, but their collaboration in designing integrated wine tours will be crucial.* GNTA's promotional efforts in this regard have had some results: the inaugural UNWTO Global Conference on Wine Tourism was held in the Kakheti wine region in September 2016. Furthermore, Lonely Planet included Georgia on its list of 'Ten of the World's Most Intriguing Wine Regions' in 2015.

In Georgia, the food, just like wine, is quite rationally an expression of the local culture. Georgian cuisine, like those of other countries, differs from region to region. A complex interaction of cultural influences can be observed when traveling from east to west. As stated by the GNTA respondent *each historical province of Georgia has its own distinct culinary tradition, such as, for example, Imeretian, Megrelian, Kakhetian cuisines. The dishes found in these regions are characterized by distinct ingredients and cooking techniques.*

Generally speaking, Georgians take great satisfaction in having the rich, piquant, strikingly original and very specific cuisine, which is the natural extension of a fertile, mineral-rich landscape fed by the pure waters of the Caucasus Mountains. Most of the food is organic, and the ingredients from the varied cuisine benefit from the mild climate that provides fresh vegetables for three quarters of the year.

As mentioned above, the cuisine produces additional economic value to the regions and is vital for boosting Georgia's economy in general. Broadly speaking, food tourism is steadily connected with creating sustainability within a country. That kind of tourism in Georgia has enormous potential to facilitate development of new quality tourism products and experiences.

Deliverers and Consumers of Cultural Heritage Tourism

The tour guide function is likely to influence the level of satisfaction tourists obtain from their tour experiences [McDonnell 2001]. Mancini's work [2001], conversely, suggests that an ineffective guide may have adverse effects on tourists' enjoyment of their holiday experience.

According to conversations with guides it is obvious that they understand their role as key players responsible for delivery of local cultural heritage peculiarities to tourists. This action involves creativity and special skills to customize their services in different circumstances. Unfortunately, they lack of opportunities to be trained how to improve their services and alleviate the negative impacts of tourism on local cultural heritage.

The guiding profession as an element of tourism industry in Georgia is not yet regulated by the official legislation, which makes guide services disorganized. There are multiple cases that even foreign guides are benefiting from this gap and arrange tours themselves through Georgia. It is worth indicating that the first attempts of establishing practice of official licensing of guides were undertaken by the Government of Adjara [Department of Tourism and Resorts of Adjara Autonomous Republic 2016].

There is a lack of focused studies published on tourism types and peculiarities in Georgia. For instance, most of the emphasis is placed on statistical data which is only related to number of tourists, the duration of average stay, visitors by country of origin and so on. There is information with regards of tourism types, reporting 41% as a cultural tourism, though not specifying details precisely [GNTA, 2015]¹.

Among other tourism promoting activities websites can play a significant role. The role of the Internet in the promotion of all aspects of international tourism has expanded rapidly in recent years [Rosen & Purinton 2004]. Many nations and districts are now designing government-sponsored tourism websites, hoping that tourists can access information about their potential destinations by browsing them. Although the official tourism websites of some countries need to be improved in terms of information provision, updating, web interfaces, and hyperlinks [Boyne et al. 2003]. Therefore, constructing effective government tourism websites is the first step in the marketing of these destinations.

Several government-sponsored websites were observed² and examined which provides a little and general overview about both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, pointing out just some of them: Georgian polyphonic music, dance and ballet. The websites of touristic agencies offer tourists different packages, though the provided information is as similar as following – *great nature and breathtaking views, hospitable people and cuisine, rich history and culture* – without explaining them in detail. Updating of the website content is of crucial importance, because online tourists will want to obtain the latest travel information; after all, tourists want not only to wander for wandering but also to wander fruitfully, cognitively, and in some cases relatively cheaply.

Summary and Conclusion

When one discusses the demonstration, documentation, protection and revival of intangible cultural heritage patterns it is of utmost importance to involve people as they ultimately are creators of it. The consideration, preservation and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage patterns ensures the maintenance of cultural heritage for future generations, on the one hand, and it will stimulate the development of a healthy and viable modern cultural life in the country, on the other hand [Kurin 2004].

Protecting cultural heritage is an extremely important endeavour given the effects of tourism's growth, pressures exacted by local populations and natural processes of erosion. Conservation efforts today reflects a set of values and purposes that realize the economic, social, political and scientific merits of the built environment and that it is worthy of protection. Most efforts today in Georgia take the form of renovation, restoration or preservation, or all of them combined into urban renewal or rural development projects. Despite valiant efforts on the part of most cities, towns, countries and other regions to preserve their past today, too much of it has already been lost owing to political conflicts, a lack of political will, financial constraints, modernization efforts that preceded conservation legislation, a lack of well-trained staff, pollution and the vagaries of nature, to name but a few forces.

The communicative power of tourism can be enhanced by improving and regulating guide services, as it is well documented that guide acts as path finder and in the same time as a vector of cultural information transfer [McDonnell 2001].

The international practice shows that expanding the list of cultural heritage sites and introducing it to wider society increases the image of a country. For that reason,

¹ Analogical trend is observed on the website of Georgian National Tourism Administration, <https://gnta.ge/statistics/> (Retrieved November 12, 2017)

² Among others were observed: <https://georgia.travel>, <https://www.visitgeorgia.ge> (Retrieved November 12, 2017).

all the resources should be exploited (state funding, funds attracted from business or private individuals) by the government bodies to effectively and for the public welfare manage the existing intangible cultural heritage resources.

Intangible knowledge-based assets emerged as a result of popular culture developed by Georgian industrialists, craftsmen, farmers which could be projected on touristic activities. This helps the country to expand the motion of local culture by including it in thematic touristic offers. The making traditions of wine, cheese, bread and snacks can be put in this category as well as crafts such as felting, enamelling, sword tempering. Certain cultural projects and other related initiatives represent a substantial opportunity for the entire country to rethink the touristic offer in terms of enhancement its historical and manufacturing background.

The cross-industrial project – Motor Valley Cluster – developed in the Region of Emilia Romagna, 1999, is a vivid example of touristic offer reconsideration by means of promoting its historical and manufacturing background. The region is well known for its world-famous sport car companies, such as Lamborghini and Ferrari and this aspect has been successfully embodied as cultural component in already rich and flamboyant touristic offer of Italian region [Alberti & Giusti 2012].

To gain the proper reputation and identity the visibility of local cultural heritage, exact synthesis of many factors are necessary:

- ✓ Cultural heritage has to be living;
- ✓ Heterogeneous actors should be aggregated: small and medium enterprises of various fields that will synchronize their activities; combination of private sector actions and government strategies. Engagement of tourism and cultural heritage can be displayed in various touristic packages. Cultural and Food Heritage as inherited resources – several tourist agencies, local craftsmen studios, hotels, museums, folk ensembles can blend efficiently and reach competitiveness;
- ✓ Improvement of regulatory mechanisms encouraging inclusion of cultural heritage advantages in tourism development strategy and in the same time ensuring protection of it. It might be manifested in retraining guides, periodic update of their knowledge and skills, in the implementation of certain measures in order to revive cultural monuments and improve their visibility.

As indicated through this research, Georgia lacks effective governance of heritage. The given cases show that, cultural tourism management should combine private sector initiatives and public sector/government strategies. One of the main tasks the tourism sector should perform is to contribute to the identification of cultural heritage, to protect and maintain it through advancement of tourism. The essential prerequisite for quality tourism is the well-preserved material and immaterial cultural heritage.

The overall richness of Georgian traditions has become one of the main motivations for traveling to this country especially for those who are curious about new cultures and performing arts, folk craft, rituals, cooking experiences and the comprehension of nature and the world as a whole. In 2011, the World Tourism Day was celebrated named as “Tourism – Linking cultures”; such “collisions” caused by the cultural interactions require dialogues, provide mutual understanding and, in turn, promote tolerance and peace.

In conclusion, deeper and comprehensive research is needed to determine apparent role of different stakeholders who aim at intensifying the tourism activities and in the same time encouraging various types of cultural heritage to stay alive and authentic. It is further clear that more research is needed into developing Georgian heritage tourism to be accomplished. For the moment, however, it should be noted that in all the types of Georgian heritage tourism discussed above, it seems that both the providers and consumers are extremely aware of the drawbacks of what they are trying to achieve (originality, uniqueness, exceptionality of culture) and the pressures they are under with respect to authenticity and commodification.

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Ochrona przeszłości dla teraźniejszości: rozwój dziedzictwa turystycznego Gruzji.

Słowa kluczowe: dziedzictwo kulturowe, turystyka, Gruzja, zachowanie, autentyczność, kuchnia.

Abstrakt: Turystyka jest jedną z najważniejszych branż na świecie, odgrywa kluczową rolę w rozwoju i konkurencyjności wielu regionów. Pomimo rosnącej debaty w literaturze na temat instytucji dziedzictwa kulturowego i turystyki na rzecz konkurencyjności regionów, relacja między dziedzictwem kulturowym a konkurencyjnością pozostaje w dużej mierze niezbadana, szczególnie w odniesieniu do mediacyjnej roli odgrywanej przez turystykę. Celem prezentowanego artykułu jest zbadanie istniejących powiązań między sektorem turystyki i zarządzania dziedzictwem kulturowym w Gruzji. W tym celu artykuł opiera się na kilku wywiadach przeprowadzonych zarówno z władzami, jak i ekspertami terenowymi. Następnie odbywa się dyskusja na temat tego, w jaki sposób kluczowi gracze postrzegają pojęcia autentyczności i komercjalizacji poprzez kształtowanie poszczególnych rodzajów gruzińskiej turystyki głęboko zakorzenionych w dziedzictwie kulturowym. Wykorzystanie dziedzictwa kulturowego (tak materialnego, jak i niematerialnego) w turystyce jest bardzo istotną kwestią w Gruzji, ponieważ zakłada ona z jednej strony ochronę i popularyzację dziedzictwa kulturowego w kraju, a z drugiej strony kładzie nacisk na rozwój turystyki kulturowej poprzez szeroko pojęte stosowanie najlepszych "wzorców" produktów turystycznych. Badania pokazują, że w Gruzji brakuje skutecznego zarządzania dziedzictwem. Badacz sugeruje, że główne zadania, jakie powinien wykonywać sektor turystyczny w Gruzji, ma przyczynić się do identyfikacji dziedzictwa kulturowego oraz jego ochrony i (samo)utrzymania w wyniku rozwoju turystyki. Podstawowym warunkiem dla jakościowej turystyki jest dobrze zachowane materialne i niematerialne dziedzictwo kulturowe. Wyniki badań mogą pomóc władzom państwowym i samorządowym złączyć i relacje potrzebne dla udanej współpracy instytucjonalnej, gdzie turystyka jest w synergii z sektorem dziedzictwa kulturowego, co spowoduje podwyższenie konkurencyjności regionu.