

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TOURIST OFFER BASED ON HERITAGE OBJECTS IN THE CITY OF BUDVA

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Abstract

Tourism, especially one related to summer tourist centers, is a well-known form of economic activity that increasingly contributes to the GDP of many countries. New times demand new forms of interest among tourists. Offers include rural tourism, spa and wellness, but also recreational and educational tourism. There are heritage buildings (fortresses) in Budva Municipality and its surroundings that can be included in supplementary offers. The current state of these buildings is very bad, so any intervention in them in the form of restoration would require large costs. As an adequate solution to this problem, tools that are increasingly used around the world these days can be used: virtual and augmented reality. Such offers contribute to the ecological sustainability of these areas. According to the results of the survey, conducted among visitors to Budva during July 2025, a large number of respondents planned during their vacation the excursions proposed in the current tourist offer and would gladly go on a tour of the fortifications if such an offer existed, while a small number of them know about the application of augmented and virtual reality in tourism.

Key Words: Cultural Tourism, education, Budva, heritage objects, augmented and virtual reality.

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Introduction

Tourism is an important economic branch that has recorded great financial results in the last few decades. Profit ensures the provision of

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services and offers that will satisfy tourists' interests, needs and desires and provide new forms of entertainment as well as education. Coastal tourism is increasingly trying to include these kinds of offers in addition to the basic ones. This is also the case in Budva, the coastal tourism center of Montenegro. Budva is the center of Montenegrin tourism, known for its sandy beaches and nightlife. Numerous hotels and private apartments meet the highest standards in the hotel industry, and rich entertainment, music and excursion programs have positioned Budva at a very high place among desirable tourist destinations.

Budva is one of the oldest settlements on the coast of the Adriatic Sea. Traces of early settlements in the wider area of the Budva coast date back to the prehistoric period, and the fortified city on the site of Budva already existed in ancient times. We find the first mention of this city in the 5th century BC, by Sophocles and Pseudo Skylax, who mentions sailing to Budva (Bešić et al., 1967). During the Hellenization process, the more advanced Hellenistic culture strongly influenced another, less developed barbarian community (Babić 2008).

There are few data related to the archaeological finds of fortification elements from this period. We can mention the 4.2 m thick wall made of massive stone blocks on the perimeter of the semicircular rampart of the Old Town, and another rampart in the southwestern part of the Budva fortress (Novaković, 2021) where the remains of the western gate of the settlement and probably a tower were also observed.

Unlike the observed fortification remains, the Budva necropolis from the Hellenistic and Roman periods was investigated in detail on several occasions, starting with its accidental discovery in 1938, then during the 1950s. Therefore, the starting point for understanding group identities within the ancient population of Butua is the archaeological record and material culture known from the "Hellenistic" necropolis next to the settlement dating from the Late Iron Age (4th to 1st century BC), which contained large quantities of imports from various production centers of the ancient Mediterranean (Dimitrijević 2015).

Among the large number of archaeological remains for the tourist offer, the fortresses located in Budva and its surroundings are of great importance. Several examples that could be incorporated into the potential offer are presented below.

Stari grad (The old town)

In order to protect their city, the people of Budva built powerful walls. The original Greek emporium consisted of a civilian settlement and an acropolis. Today, you can see fragments of the ramparts with the entrance gate, on which additions and alterations are visible. The Acropolis was in a dominant place in the city, where the Castle of St. Mary is now, better known as the Citadel.

Citadel

The Citadel, once known as the city fortress Kaštel, is located on the highest part of Budva and is one of the most important historical and cultural places of this beautiful coastal city. Built in 840. At the time of Venetian domination, it had a dominant fortification role both in its architectural form and in its contents. It also has the function of a small town with all the necessary conditions to withstand the long sieges of Budva (Mitrović & Medin, 2017). During the Austro-Hungarian rule in these areas, it served as accommodation for soldiers, but also as a prison. Today it houses: The remains of the church of Santa Maria in Castello and a library with a large number of antique books.

Castello and Lazaret

In Petrovac, there are archaeological remains from prehistory and the ancient period (mosaic, part of an ancient building) (Bulić, 1902; Nikolajević, 1956). The area of Mirišta becomes the nucleus of the settlement from which medieval Lastva will emerge (Zagarčanin, 2016). Two buildings are recognizable: Kastelo and Lazaret. The remains of the Castello fortress are the first to "greet" ships and visitors from the sea, and the Lazaret to those coming from the land (Medin, 2016).

It is assumed that the Castello and the Lazaret were built in the late Middle Ages or the early modern period. According to some sources, they were fenced off by the Venetians as well as the locals. The Castello was a multi-storied fortification for the permanent local garrison of the Venetian army. The nearby Lazaret was a quarantine – a military hospital, and then a barracks for the Austro-Hungarian army (which succeeded the Venetian one). Today, it is a restaurant-type building, with significant exterior and interior changes, mostly unfavorable for cultural heritage.

Kosmač

It is the most well-preserved building of all the fortifications built on the territory of the municipality of Budva by the great Habsburg Monarchy, on the border line between Montenegro and Austria, with the exception of the barracks, which is located in the Old Town. The Kosmač fortress is located on the hill of the same name above the village of Brajići, not far from Budva. It was built by the Austrians in the period between 1841 and 1850. This place is also the most beautiful vantage point, which is still visited most often by mountaineers, given that it is located on the route of the Primorska Mountaineering Traverse, which winds along the slopes of the mountains along the entire Montenegrin coast. (CDM.me, 2017).

Mogren fortress

Mogren fortress was built at the west of Stari Grad, above the second Mogren beach, on the slope of Spas. It was built as a barracks and military base for Austrian soldiers in 1860, in a place with a wonderful view of the open sea and Budva Bay (Museums and Galleries of Budva, n.d.). Its main function was to protect Budva from attacks. It was badly damaged in the 1979 earthquake and was never rebuilt.

Sveti Stefan (Saint Stephen)

Fortress was built on the island of Sveti Stefan in the 15th century by the Paštrovići tribe (BBC News, 2022), when it was inhabited by the first inhabitants. Inside the fortress on the rocks, which originally served as a warehouse, churches were built (there are 4 of them on the island). They gave this fortified settlement the name Sveti Stefan, after the name of the church of St. Stephen (dedicated to Archdeacon Stephen the First Martyr), and it became a cultural and commercial center. During the 20th century, it was turned into a tourist resort. The owner, the state of Montenegro, leased the island, but the tenants decided to close the hotels, which are still not working today.

The mentioned fortresses, except St. Stefan, are in a bad condition, both from the ravages of time and from the earthquake that hit this part in 1979 and caused great damage to these buildings. Due to the extremely high cost of renovation, no intervention has been carried out on these buildings until now. This is why introducing VR would be highly beneficial and,

using new technologies, allow visitors to see these fortifications in the form they had in the age of their greatest glory and experience through AR and the participation of the local population in times gone by. Digital tools and virtual reality increase accessibility to cultural sights and reduce the distance between visitors and cultural-historical attractions. (Dramićanin & Sančanin, 2022).

VR represents the best solution because in this way it will be possible to increase tourist visits and thus increase the economic power of the area, which would provide means for improving the economic conditions of the population as well as provide means for access to other forms of preservation of this built heritage.

Research results

According to statistical data in the period 2020-2024, of the total number of tourists who came to Montenegro, most of them visited the coast, and of that number, over 40% visited Budva and its surroundings. The highest number of overnight stays was achieved also in Budva - more than 35% of total (Statistical Office of Montenegro, 2025). These data demonstrate Budva's touristic significance.

The data for this research was obtained on the basis of a survey conducted in the city of Budva during July 2025. The questions in the survey were answered by 290 respondents of different ages. Out of the total number of respondents (290), 46.21% were female and 53.79% were male.

Table 1: *Gender of respondents*

Gender	Number of respondents		Percentage
Male	78	156	53,79
Female	67	134	46,21
Total	145	290	100,0

Source: *Authors*

The largest number of respondents came to Budva for vacation. This was the case in the responses represented by both gender.

Table 2: *Reason for coming to Budva (total)*

Is vacationing the reason for your arrival in Budva?	Respondents	Percentage
No	30	10,34

Among other things	18	6,21
Yes	242	83,45
Total	290	100,0

Source: *Author*

Table 3: *Reason for coming to Budva (gender)*

		Men	Women
Is vacationing the reason for your arrival in Budva?	No	14	16
	Among other things	16	2
	Yes	126	116
Total		156	134

Source: *Author*

Table 4: *Excursions (total)*

		Respondents	Percentage
Will you go on the suggested excursions in the offer	No	55	18,97
	Probably	115	39,66
	Yes	120	41,37
Total		290	100

Source: *Author*

When asked whether they went on excursions that were presented to them in the tourist offer during their stay, 41.37% of the respondents answered positively, mostly women. A large number of respondents were undecided (39.66%), which shows that the offered excursions are not that attractive to the surveyed visitors.

Among undecided persons and those who were not interested in excursions, men predominated.

Table 5: *Excursions (gender)*

		Men	Women
Will you go on the suggested excursions in the offer	No	44	11
	Probably	69	46
	Yes	43	77
Total		156	134

Source: *Author*

When asked if they were familiar with the possibility of using virtual and augmented reality in the presentation of built heritage, a large number of respondents answered that they were not aware of it (240).

Table 6: VR and AR (total)

		Respondents	Percentage
Have you heard about the use of virtual and augmented reality in tourism?	Yes	16	5,52
	I know something about it	34	11,72
	No	240	82,76
Total		290	100,0

Source: *Author*

In terms of knowledge of the use of augmented and virtual reality, male persons were in the lead. Only two women knew about the existence of such tools for presenting the built heritage, while as many as 122 of them had not heard about it. In the case of men, there is also a large number of answers that reflected ignorance of the application of augmented and virtual reality in tourism in offers related to visits to historical buildings revitalized in this way.

Table 7: VR and AR (gender)

		Men	Women
Have you heard about the use of virtual and augmented reality in tourism?	Yes	6	2
	I know something about it	32	10
	No	118	122
Total		156	134

Source: *Author*

Nevertheless, many expressed an interest in visiting the fortifications in the vicinity of the place where they spend the summer if such an offer existed (over 62%) and 32.41% expressed an interest in such tours if it would fit into their budget. If we look at this interest according to the gender of the respondents, we conclude that more men are interested in such tours, but that even for this gender, the tour depends to a greater extent on the price of such excursions.

Table 8: Fortification tour (total)

		Respondents	Percentage
Would you go on a fortification tour if such an offer existed?	I am not interested	16	5,52
	It also depends on the price	94	32,41
	Yes	180	62,07
Total		290	100

Source: *Author*

It is also interesting that a large number of female respondents showed interest in such tours, considering that there is an opinion that this type of offer is reserved for men.

Table 9: *Fortification tour (gender)*

		Men	Women
Would you go on a fortification tour if such an offer existed?	I am not interested	4	12
	It also depends on the price	53	41
	Yes	96	84
Total		156	134

Source: *Author*

Conclusion

Many coastal cities in the world have the epithet of summer or sea tourist centers thanks to their geographical position. What is associated with the sea is rest, enjoyment, relaxation, swimming... That is enough for many tourists. However, there are tourists whose interest is not in a passive, but an active and educational vacation. This is recognized as a great chance for economic profit, which is realized by providing such an offer. The already formed offer for such tourists is beginning to attract these other, passive ones as well, so over time an increasing number of them also decide to complete their vacation by getting to know the destinations in the vicinity of the place where they are spending their vacation.

The offer, as a form of educational or adventure tourism, can include a tour of fortresses and similar heritage buildings in Budva Municipality and its surroundings. If we look at the condition of these buildings, we can conclude that they are in a very bad condition, so any intervention on them in the form of restoration would require large costs. As an adequate solution to this problem, tools that are increasingly used around the world these days can be used: virtual and augmented reality. We can find something like this as a potential that is located in an important tourist center – Budva and its wider surroundings.

Revitalization using VR and AR could effectively change the environment in which the objects are located and improve the planning of the local government while improving the facilities and services in the environment and thus the quality of life. This kind of heritage is worth revitalizing because it represents historical value and shows the importance of these areas in people's lives throughout the centuries.

Heritage objects should be revitalized and promoted, considering that many tourists come to this area but do not have the right information and organized visits to such places unless they hear about the existence of such objects from the local population and decides to visit them by themselves.

The ecological aspect of this way of presenting the built heritage is significant considering that it would be about preserving nature and the authentic ambience.

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