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Culture and tourism: from antagonism to synergism / Kultura i turystyka – od antagonizmu do synergii

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The aim of this piece of work is presenting the nature and various benefits resulting from the relations between tourism and culture. On the one hand it would be difficult for tourism to come into existence without the historic values of monuments, on the other tourist activity contributes to preservation and maintenance of those monumental values of many places. Thus, one may state that tourism and culture are condemned to each other or, seen in a more positive light, meant for each other due to the rule of mutual benefit. The author compares this relation to “mariage de raison” asking at the same time if is possible to transform it into “mariage d’amour”.

Tourism and Culture: a definition of the domain of knowledge

The domain of knowledge Tourism and Culture covers all forms of tourism which have culture as one of the attraction factors. In this context the cultural tourism product (Figure 1) must be interpreted as a composition of:

- the core product being the cultural attraction element (museum, historic building, monument, event) and the related specific cultural tourism services, such as information and education
- the additional product being the general tourism product elements and the related tourism services consisting of:
 - general tourist facilities and services:
- tourist organizations and travel intermediaries: tourist information offices, national tourist organizations, tourist associations, travel agencies, tour operators
- accommodation suppliers: hotels, holiday parks, camping sites
- catering industry and retail business: restaurants, cafés and pubs, shops, banks
 - transportation infrastructure:
- accessibility (using your own form of transport or public transport), signposting, parking facilities
- private and public transport facilities: car, coach, train, plane, boat or ship, taxi, city bus, underground.

The concept of culture must be interpreted in its broad, descriptive sense as well as in its restricted, normative sense. In its *broad sense* the concept on the one hand covers practical, material matters manufactured by man to make life easier, e.g. houses, clothing, appliances and utensils, and on the other hand traditions and feasts, religion and rituals, expressions of art and language; in short everything that expresses the intellectual and spiritual life of a social group. It is the aspect of culture studied in the history of civilization, cultural anthropology and ethnology. In its *restrictive sense* culture can be defined as the creations of artists, composers and writers: paintings, buildings, operas, stage plays, literary works, films and so on. This area of research is covered by fields of study such as history of art, musicology and literary theory.

¹ This article is an abridged and adapted version of the inaugural speech delivered by dr. Wil Munsters on assuming the office of Associate Professor of Cultural Tourism at Zuyd University on Friday, 23 April 2004, and was first published in *ATLAS Reflections*, October 2005. A free copy of the full text can be requested from the author.

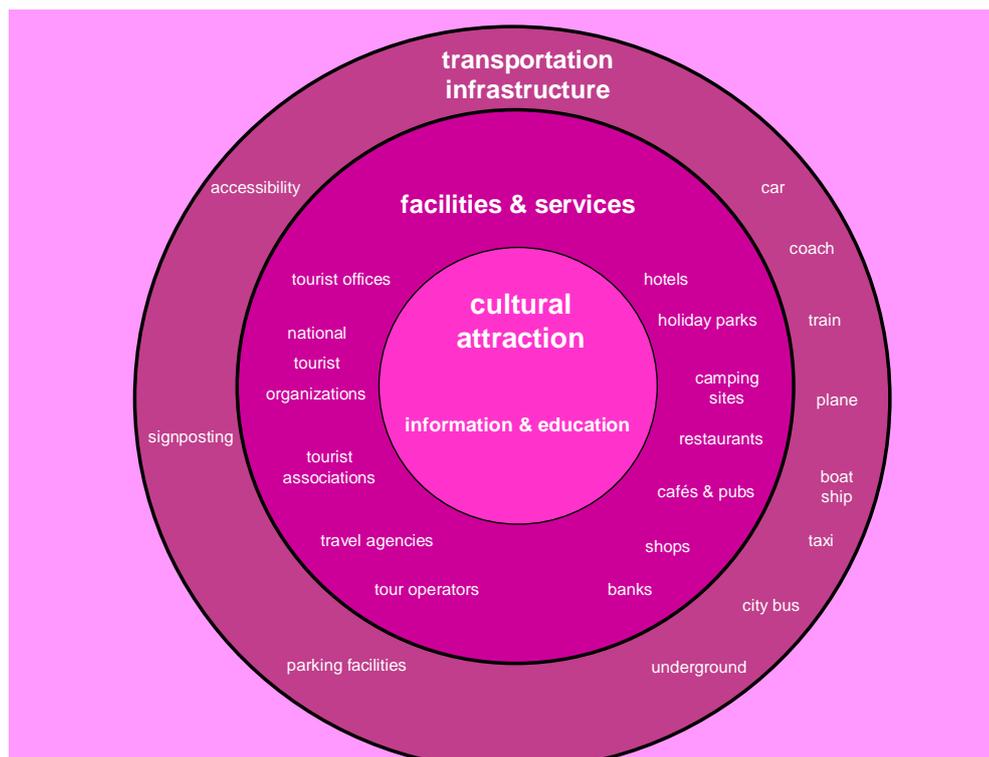


Figure 1. The cultural tourism product / **Ryc. 1.** Kulturowy produkt turystyczny

Since the beginning of the 1980s a number of trends can be observed which are linked to a growing demand for spending one's leisure time and holidays on cultural activities and on getting to know other cultures. One of the indicators is the increase in number of people visiting the national museums in the past decades. Likewise the annual Heritage Open Days are pleased to experience a great interest both nationally and internationally again and again. The increasing interest in art and culture and the growth of cultural tourism arising from it can be explained in view of socio-cultural and demographic developments, such as:

- the increase in educational level resulting in a stronger demand for educational recreational possibilities and new aesthetic experiences
- the increasing number of senior citizens whose leisure activities to a large extent are focused on intellectual enrichment
- the growth of available leisure time causing a boost in short cultural city trips.

All this has resulted in the development and improvement of the cultural tourism product having received more and more attention from the various parties involved in tourism:

- industry: hotel and catering industry, travel agents, tour operators, retail trade
- tourist organizations: tourist information offices, national tourist organizations, tourist associations
- governments: local, regional, national, international governing bodies
- cultural institutes: museums, theatres, services and societies for the preservation of monuments and historic buildings.

Parallel to this the theme of culture and tourism has basked in an increasing interest from scientific circles, judging by the numerous full-day seminars, conferences and academic papers devoted to cultural tourism. In this context the prominent role of Greg Richards deserves to get an honourable mention. In 1991 he took the first step towards the foundation of ATLAS. By specializing in cultural tourism Greg Richards has given a strong impetus to the exploration of an undeveloped field of research. As founding father of the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Research Programme, he was at the cradle of a series of international market researches into cultural tourism which at a certain time were aimed at countries and cities, and at other times at cultural at-

tractions and events. The crop invariably consisted of authoritative publications². Its fifth round of research – an image study of cultural tourism destinations world-wide – has been scheduled for 2004 and 2005.

Timeo Danaos...

However, the symbiosis between culture and tourism is complex and not self-evident, because in the first instance culture has not been nor is it created to serve as a tourist attraction. Historic buildings, for instance, have been classified as such in order to be preserved and this starting point could be at right angles to them being opened to the tourist public with all possible detrimental results. Traditionally speaking, there has always been a certain tension between the tourism sector and the parties who aim at perfectly preserving the cultural heritage. The commercialization of cultural properties by way of tourism product development and their preservation by taking protective measures appear to be contradictory and incompatible objectives. What may be good for tourism, is not necessarily good for culture and vice versa. The area of tension between the various influential parties operating in the field of cultural tourism in order to realize their objectives using the appropriate means is a continuous source of discussions between supporters as well as opponents of cultural tourism, in which arguments of cultural, social and commercial-economic nature are exchanged³. Opening cultural heritage to tourists is often compared to bringing in the Trojan Horse. The list of the wooden horse full of warriors was an idea of the resourceful Odysseus to conquer the city of Troy after years of it being besieged by the Greek. As the Trojan priest Laocoön expresses his suspicion about the horse left behind by the Greek in Virgil's *Aeneid*, in the verse which has turned into a saying "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes" ("I fear the Greek, though they are bearers of gifts"), thus modern guardians of culture fear tourists as barbarians who often cause damage to cultural properties, yet at the same time form a source of income for culture preservation⁴. In the eyes of these prophets of doom stimulating cultural tourism boils down to opening the doors of the temple for the tourism industry, depicted as a horde of greedy merchants and wily money changers who desecrate culture by turning it into their field of activity. A good example of this is the statement by the leading American heritage historian, David Lowenthal: "Tourism needs *heritage*, but not vice versa"⁵. The first proposition this antithesis consists of is completely correct: in the preceding paragraphs it has already been shown how much culture has become a part of the tourism product. The second proposition, however, is incorrect and shows signs of constricted vision and an ivory-tower mentality which has blinded this professor emeritus to the actual advantages tourism has for culture.

Anything of value is defenceless...

Of course, culture is extremely vulnerable. Restricting us to recent world history, examples of culture terrorism are all over the place, from the destruction of works of art and the burning of books by the German National-Socialists in their cultural-political battle against *Entartete Kunst* to blowing up centuries-old Buddha statues in Bamiyan by the Afghan Taliban in their role as iconoclasts. "Anything of value is defenceless", the culture-buff will sigh, citing the line of the Dutch poet Lucebert⁶ (6). In their condemnation of the behaviour of tourists some guardians of culture go so far as to no longer discriminate between the iconoclastic fury of culture terrorists and tourists who cause material damage to historic monuments, such as vandalism and theft at the Angkor Vat temple complex in Cambodia, where statues were decapitated and *objets d'art* were

² Among other publications *Cultural Tourism in Europe* (1996) and *Cultural Attractions and European Tourism* (2001).

³ Cf. Munsters W. (2001), *The Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht* [in:] G. Richards [ed.], *Cultural Attractions and European Tourism*, CAB International, Oxon, p. 105.

⁴ Virgil. *Aeneid*, book 2, verse 49.

⁵ *NRC Handelsblad*, 6 December 2002, p. 21.

⁶ Lucebert. De zeer oude zingt. In *Galerie Zuid*, 15 June 1954.

stolen by tourists and local traders. Even replicas which served as replacements of objects that had disappeared turned out not to be safe for this unbridled rapacity.

However, *comparaison n'est pas raison*. It would go too far to equate cultural tourists with culture terrorists. After all the purpose is different: culture terrorists aim at the determined, radical destruction of tangible and intangible heritage out of ideological motives. Tourists who over-indulge in plundering, can be qualified as obsessed souvenir collectors looking for authentic, tangible mementoes of their holidays. As far as impact is concerned the organised mass destruction of cultural properties by dictatorial regimes can likewise not be compared to the occasional thefts by those individuals without any sense of standards. The proverbial saying "pearls before swines" sooner applies to the misconduct of those tourists who do not show respect for culture.

Nevertheless the question remains whether the risk of damage to cultural properties is sufficient ground to drive tourism out of the temple of culture. For reasons of culture preservation it has indeed been decided in a number of cases to switch over to the temporary or permanent closing of historic buildings and monuments and to holding off tourists at certain events. The caves of Lascaux have been closed to the public since 1963, because, due to the lighting and the atmospheric disruption caused by the exhalation of visitors, algae started to attack the prehistoric murals. On archaeological sites such as Stonehenge in Great Britain and Carnac in Brittany the menhirs are cordoned off as the prehistoric megaliths are too vulnerable to cope with millions of tourists a year.

...becomes rich from touchability

In order to find an answer to the question whether such tourist-hostile measures are to solve the problem, we will at first consult Lucebert, the poet cited earlier on. Since the Romantic Movement poets often see themselves after all as visionary spirits, with Victor Hugo's *le mage* ("the seer") in the lead. The fact that Lucebert's line of poetry "anything of value is defenceless" has acquired the force of thesis is clear proof of this seer's gift. The faded verse of Lucebert regains its colours if read in the light of the context. Only men of letters know the following line "becomes rich from touchability", although this line is no less pregnant. This line of verse also links up wonderfully well to the general purport of our argument. To that end *touchability* should not be interpreted literally in the restricted sense of "something that can be touched with one's hands", like ill-mannered tourists tend to do in Angkor Vat. A more open interpretation is required, in which the word is explained in the broader sense of "something one can get in touch with". Within the context of this speech the *touchability* of art and culture can be explained as "accessibility to the tourist", an essential characteristic of the cultural tourism product as it was defined in the preceding passages. For a tourist attraction is by definition *accessible to the public*. It can even be said that the tourism attraction value of the cultural heritage is primarily determined by the physical accessibility and in the second instance only by the characteristics it possesses *sui generis*. The more easily a cultural object or event can be reached and visited, the greater the appeal will be.

If the valuable, yet so defenceless cultural heritage is accessible to the tourist, it will literally be enriched by the tourism revenue which can be used for its preservation. By, for instance, adding a new, tourism purpose to the architectural heritage, the resources generated by hotel and catering activities can be applied to restoration and maintenance. The conservation and extension of museum collections can also be financed from the sale of entrance tickets, postcards, books, souvenirs, food and refreshments to visiting tourists. In a figurative sense the cultural heritage will also be enriched due to the added tourism attraction value caused by visitors who with their interest keep culture alive. Thus tourism interest has led to the preservation and even revival of historic traditions and folkloristic feasts, such as the country wedding in Joure in the Dutch province of Friesland.

Not only in a material sense can tourism contribute towards heritage being preserved for the future, but it can also do so in a socio-cultural respect as it is a means to make the supply of culture more accessible to the public at large. Tourism stimulates cultural participation and with that historical awareness. Both are prerequisites in order to create public support for the preservation

of monuments and historic buildings as well as for museum policies. Moreover, tourism can promote the interest in, as well as the understanding and respect for the culture and history of other peoples. Tourism enables the nations of Europe to get acquainted with each other's country, language and culture. To the Western tourist it offers an opportunity to get in touch with unfamiliar cultures in Third World countries and to gain an insight in the complex issues of developing countries. A condition is that culture administrators, governments, tourist organizations and tourism companies provide adequate advice and information to make the cultural tourist aware of the importance of heritage preservation for future generations and of the part (s)he can perform in this. It needs to be pointed out to the tourist that his/her visit can have positive or negative effects on the condition of the cultural heritage. Thus respect, which lays the foundation for the preservation of tangible and intangible culture by tourists, is inspired.

The enriching effect can be felt even more deeply if the cultural tourism attraction succeeds in *touching* the visitor and, to use the terms of the contemporary *experience economy*, succeeds in enabling the tourist to *experience* culture. In short, the step from transitoriness to permanency as expressed in Lucebert's lines of verse

anything of value is defenceless
becomes rich from touchability

can be made if tourists are not seen as barbaric enemies, but as potential allies in the defence of art and culture. As one of the pillars under sustainable cultural tourism *La Bête* can contribute to saving *La Belle*, however paradoxical this statement may sound to some.

In pursuit of balance...

Culture is too fragile for mass tourism. With the development of cultural tourism quality needs to take precedence over quantity. Care for the quality of the culture supply determines the attractiveness of the cultural tourism product and this needs to keep pace with the ever increasing requirements of the modern critical, for widely-travelled, tourist consumer. In order to achieve the required quality level cultural tourism needs to develop in the direction of sustainable tourism. This term has so far been used especially with regard to nature and environmentally-friendly types of tourism, such as eco-tourism. Sustainable tourism is expected to serve the interests of the local population, nature and the tourism industry. It is a form of socially responsible entrepreneurship which is summed up in the slogan: *people, planet, profit*.

The principles of sustainable tourism are *mutatis mutandis* just as much applicable to tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which, when exposed to negative influences, can be just as vulnerable as certain eco-systems. It is best to use the pursuit of quality tourism as a guideline, characterized by a balance between attracting tourism as a source of new jobs and income on the one hand and protecting the culture, social climate and environment of the local population on the other hand. In other words the objectives of sustainable cultural tourism are characterized by finding a balance between the various forces within the cultural tourism area of tension. Combined in harmony these forces form the cultural tourism sustainability mix, the four Ps of which are: *preservation, population, public* and *profit*. The distinct objectives of these four Ps are as follows:

Preservation

Optimizing preservation of culture. Sustainable cultural tourism is culture-friendly as the preservation of culture is guaranteed, whether it concerns the original condition of a historic building or monument, the authentic character of an event or the historic traditions and customs of the local population.

Population

Maximization of the socio-cultural and economic advantages for the host community. Sustainable cultural tourism just as much implies respect for the environment and cultural identity of the host community as it does its involvement in tourism development.

Public

Optimizing the value of his/her holiday for the tourist by providing him/her with a satisfactory and enriching experience. The rise of the experience economy results in the visiting of a cultural attraction element needing to be an experience in itself in order to satisfy the longing for repeatedly new experiences of the contemporary tourist. Moreover, highly educated cultural tourists lead busy lives, resulting in them considering their leisure time to be quality time. On the other hand the tourist needs to be knowledgeable about art and culture, should (s)he be able to show understanding for their preservation. In marketing strategy terms, this objective implies an orientation on selected target groups interested in culture.

Profit

Maximization of the long-term yield and continuity for the tourism industry. The basic condition for realization of these business objectives is that companies, when operating the cultural tourism market and aiming at a cost-effective development, feel responsible for the preservation of culture and express this understanding to their clients.

For the realization of these strategic objectives there is a range of measures of a technical, environmental, organizational, financial, promotional and educational nature. The choice of measures depends on the type of cultural tourism product and the level of tourist pressure on the area. As part of visitor management you can apply soft measures, such as advice and information, when the number of visitors or their behaviour does not give any cause for serious concern. Hard measures, such as severe visiting regulation, are required when tourist pressure damages the cultural heritage.

As soon as tourism is in danger of going beyond the physical and/or social capacity of the cultural attraction, one should bear in mind that cultural tourism can only have a future if this negative development can be stopped in time. The limits of tolerability are exceeded when culture becomes a consumer good and application for tourism purposes turns into consumption. After all, tangible or intangible damage does not only pose a threat to the intrinsic value, but certainly also to the tourist attractiveness of the culture supply. If the continued existence of the cultural attraction element is endangered to such an extent that the only solution is keeping the tourists away, it, by definition, loses its function as a place of interest for tourists, and at the same time the *raison d'être* of cultural tourism ceases to be.

This threat cannot only be seen from the supply perspective, but also from the demand perspective. If negative developments make enjoying or exploring culture impossible, this will cause dissatisfaction among the tourists with a serious cultural interest, for they will no longer get what they are looking for. In the worst case, the disappointment about the decline in quality and the commercialization of the culture supply can lead to these target groups staying away and consequently other groups, too. If such a downward spiral is not altered, cultural tourism could become self-destructive in the long-run, with all its consequences – not in the least in a commercial-economic respect! Besides, the tourism industry also benefits from a harmonious development of cultural tourism so that the opportunities which culture can offer are not obstructed and delayed. A purely commercial approach indicates short-term thinking and can lead to unbridled tourism growth which will be at the expense of the attraction elements on which cultural tourism is based. Determining the growth limits of cultural tourism together, is the challenge all parties are faced with. Sustainable tourism implies that the interests of all those concerned are guaranteed in the long run. Close consideration is therefore required between the culture administrators, the tourism industry and the various governments as parties who look after the interests of the host community. The product benefits from cooperation, because it stimulates cohesion and quality. It is the basis for a healthy symbiosis between culture and tourism.

Best practice

The pursuit of sustainable tourism is often laughed off as being a utopian dream, however, the result of the most considerable restoration project carried out in The Netherlands during the

1990s shows that this form of tourism can be a feasible option. It concerns the restoration of the historic country estate of Saint Gerlach, situated in the Geul valley near Houthem-Valkenburg (Limburg) and which comprises a castle, a convent for noblewomen and a tenant farmstead. At the moment the Saint-Gerlach estate is a member of the ChâteauHotels and Restaurants of Camille Oostwegel Holding, a chain which further consists of Erenstein Castle in Kerkrade, the Winseler Hof in Terwinselen, Château Neercanne in Maastricht and, as from the beginning of 2005, the Kruisherenklooster (a former abbey) in the historic centre of Maastricht. When putting this project to the test against the objectives of sustainable cultural tourism it appears that in practice it is quite possible to find a balance between the diversity of interests represented by the *Ps* of the cultural tourism sustainability mix.

Preservation

The estate owes its name and its existence to the pious hermit Saint Gerlachus. Already quite soon after the hermit died in 1165, his grave in the adjacent baroque church attracted many pilgrims. An abbey was founded in order to offer good lodgings to these pilgrims. This was later turned into a religious retreat for noblewomen. Around 1800 part of the convent was converted into a castle. In the course of the previous century the buildings deteriorated and a foundation was established which devoted itself to the preservation of these historic buildings. And they did so quite successfully, for in 1994 this heritage property was allocated a new tourism use, by virtue of an agreement between the Foundation for the Preservation of Saint Gerlachus, the parish, Camille Oostwegel ChâteauHotels and Restaurants and De Vechtse Slag, a recreational real estate developer. The restoration project resulting from this, in which also the National Society for the preservation of historic buildings, the Province of Limburg and the municipality of Valkenburg participated, was completed in 1997. The castle now contains a restaurant and the farmstead has been turned into a hotel. The convent with its accompanying premises have been converted into a hotel and apartment complex. As far as the exterior architecture is concerned the new block of apartments has been based on the original style of the old premises, yet it has remained modest in size to prevent the protected view of the village from being harmed.

Population

In exchange and showing consideration for the wishes of the Church Board, a number of social and cultural services have been made in addition to these commercial facilities, for the benefit of the religious life of the local population and the pilgrims: a new presbytery, a Saint Gerlachus chapel with a room for catechism instruction and a museum with a Saint Gerlachus treasury in the cloister. In order to prevent hotel guests from disturbing parishioners and pilgrims in their prayers a spatial divider, a so-called “reli(gion)-buffer”, has been put up between the church buildings and the hotel and catering premises. Also with the management of these combined premises a harmonious synthesis of the commercial, cultural and religious functions is aimed at. In cooperation with the parish organ recitals are held for the guests in the church. Pilgrims on their way to the Spanish holy place of Santiago de Compostela, are allowed to stay the night in the old sacristy of the Saint Gerlachus church, which has been furnished as a *refugio*. They may also partake of a special pilgrim’s meal, which is prepared in the kitchen of Château Saint Gerlachus. Thus religious tourism and cultural tourism can peacefully go hand in hand. Thanks to this joint approach the public support for the project has been firmly secured within the local community. Seen from the view point of Valkenburg aan de Geul’s tourism policy the arrival of the castle hotel fits in the municipality’s pursuit of upgrading the tourism product by a shift from mass tourism to quality tourism, which at the same time is of benefit to the welfare of the local population.

Public

The culture-loving tourist is in for a good time in every respect, for a stay on the country estate is a guaranteed enriching holiday experience. The historic buildings and rooms provide an authentic setting for dining, staying the night or celebrations, and they meet the increasing de-

mand for unique accommodation with a high experience value, a personal hospitality touch and regional gastronomy, a need which is especially present among the well-to-do and highly-educated cultural tourists.

Planet

Even the objectives of the natural tourism sustainability mix, symbolized by the *P* of *planet*, are met. It is possible to enjoy cultural as well as natural beauty since the farm lands, which became available after the last tenant left, were entrusted to the management of Limburg Landscape Foundation and the Ark Foundation. Ingendael is the name of the new, publicly accessible nature area around the river Geul, where wild breeds of Koniks horses and Galloway cattle roam freely.

Profit

The revenues from the commercial hotel and restaurant operations enable the preservation and maintenance of this cultural tourism property. The characteristic restaurants, accommodation facilities and conference venues equipped with all modern conveniences attract the guests without whom the continuance of the estate would not be guaranteed. As far as attractiveness is concerned Château Saint-Gerlachus is doing well out of the growing popularity of *boutique hotels* (independent hotels with their own particular character) as counterparts of *box hotels* (large-scale standard hotels belonging to international chains).

The Saint Gerlachus restoration project can serve as a model for a strategic cooperation between the various parties in the cultural tourism field. In it the realization of the shared interests guarantee the preservation of both the tangible culture (the estate, historic buildings and church treasures) and the intangible culture (the religious life of the parish community and the pilgrims' experience of faith). As a socially responsible entrepreneur *avant la lettre*, Camille Oostwegel may rightfully call himself a restaurateur-cum-restorer as he has not only succeeded in the culinary sense to create high-class restaurants, but also because in the cultural sense he has successfully restored damaged cultural heritage.

From mariage de raison to mariage d'amour

So culture and tourism are often condemned to each other or, seen in a more positive light, meant for each other. To refute the words of the heritage historian David Lowenthal: tourism needs heritage, but also vice versa. Whether out of sheer necessity or not most culture administrators will permit this mariage de raison between culture and commerce. The dowry which tourism invests in this marriage of convenience, is too profitable to reject on principle. However, would it not be so much more enjoyable for both partners to free themselves of the tight chains of this monstrous strategic alliance? Is it not so that her not knowing what La Bête - besides revenues - has to offer, makes himself unpopular with La Belle? Would it not be possible for the culture sector to grow from this rational union based on self-interest, from this pragmatic win-win situation, from this marriage of convenience into a mariage d'amour? That is to say a marital union in which love comes from both sides, in which it is a matter of reciprocity and giving and taking is based on mutual understanding, respect and empathy with someone else's ideas. In order to effect this synergy the latent love for art and culture should be brought to flourish with the Tourism partner, whilst with the Culture partner understanding for the commercial course of action of the tourism industry should be fostered. It is definitely worth the effort, for the rewards which both parties shall reap of this marriage, shall be high.

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Słowa kluczowe: kultura, turystyka, atrakcje kulturowe

STRESZCZENIE

Celem niniejszej pracy jest ukazanie natury oraz różnorodnych korzyści płynących ze związków pomiędzy turystyką i kulturą. Z jednej strony trudno byłoby zaistnieć turystyce bez historycznych walorów zabytków, z drugiej zaś działalność turystyczna przyczynia się do zachowania owych zabytkowych wartości wielu miejsc. Wobec tego można stwierdzić, iż turystyka i kultura są w pewien sposób na siebie skazane za sprawą zasady obopólnej korzyści. Autor porównuje tę zależność do „małżeństwa z rozsądku”, pytając jednocześnie, czy możliwe jest przekształcenie go w „małżeństwo z miłości”.

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