LITERARY WALKING TOURS AS A FORM OF WELL-BEING: SLOVENE WRITERS' TRAIL AND THE PREŽIHOV VORANC ROUTE

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Abstract The concept of literary tourism is becoming increasingly interesting, not only for researchers and students, but also for tourism practitioners and destination managers, who are interested in the supply of and demand for this sub-type of cultural tourism. In recent decades, it has become an important niche in tourism. Especially in rural areas it is perceived as useful in supporting the existent tourism activities and helping to develop new ones. Not only is it prose, drama and poetry that inspire people to become literary tourists, but also biographies and autobiographies, screen adaptations of literary works, theatre performances, etc. Literary walking tours have emerged as a wellreceived type of literary tourism product, which have been associated to well-being. Some of them are also included in the most popular tour guides, such as, for example, The Lonely Planet.

Keywords:

literary tourism, walking trails, well-being, literature, place writing.



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1 Introduction

As part of Literary Tourism, literary walking tours are on one hand a tool for attracting cultural and literary tourists, and on the other hand they help redistribute tourists from the most visited areas to less crowded ones. The United Kingdom and France are among the most developed literary destinations in Europe, but there are many other destinations that have rich literary heritage that has not yet been evaluated as a tourism resource for upgrading or developing tourism products. This is also the case in Slovenia, where literary heritage is very important - Slovenes tend to say that their national existence is based on culture and that culture, especially literature, plays a fundamental role in the national identity. Before concentrating on literary walking tours in Slovenia, literary tourism as an increasingly significant tool in the tourism sector (Potočnik Topler, 2020) needs some additional explanation. This phenomenon is understood as travel or movement to a destination due to an interest in some form of literary association therewith (Robinson & Andersen, 2002). It is based on the belief that by visiting a literary site a visitor can understand the author's life and works more than by reading literary reviews. Smith (2012) emphasizes that Literary Tourism is a very broad term, one that connects literature to many other disciplines, offering a shared medium for creating, contemplating, developing places and personalities, etc. Agarwal and Shaw (2018, 8) therefore point out its relation to heritage tourism "since it results from interest in the personal life histories of writers or in their works of literature which are more often than not set in a historical context". Literary tourism as a type of cultural or heritage tourism is primarily connected to visiting "both those places associated with writers in their real lives and those which provided settings for their novels" (Herbert, 1995:33 in Stiebel, 2007). In addition, Smith (2012: 9) argues that also book signings and creative writing courses are parts of literary tourism, which is, according to her understanding (ibid.), "a form of cultural tourism involving travel to places and events associated with writers, writers' works, literary depictions and the writing of creative literature."

Many positive examples of Literary Tourism development can be found across the world, of course, with each destination having its own characteristics. Literary walking tours have emerged as a well-received type of Literary Tourism products, and some of them are also included in the most popular tour guides, such as for example, The Lonely Planet, which is suggesting the so-called top 10 literary walking

tours of the world, among them the Literary Pub Crawl in Joyce's and Beckett's Dublin, the Millennium Tour in Larsson's (thriller author) Stockholm, walking in Jane Austen's Bath, Melbourne and Shanghai Literary Tours, Literary London and Paris, etc. At the moment, online editions of Lonely Planet are advertising walking tours on Google Maps, but the focus of this article, which employs descriptive methods and content and comparative analyses, is on the actual literary walking tours, which enable walking, hiking, physical exercises and, together with reading and possible developing of personal creativity, the overall mental and physical wellbeing.

2 Literary Trails in Slovenia

In 2013, the Slovenian Writers Association introduced the Slovenian Writers Trail (Figure 1), which leads across all Slovenia, connects the birthplaces and homes of Slovenian writers and poets, from Miško Kranjec's birthplace in Velika Polana in Prekmurje to the birthplace of Oton Župančič in Vinica in Bela Krajina (Forstnerič Hajnšek et al., 2013: 8), to be precise, the Slovenian Writers' Trail leads from the Mura region to the Drava region, and further on to Koroška (Carinthia), where it turns to the Savinja region, Celje, and the Obsotelje region, continues to the Sava region (Posavje and Zasavje) and onto Gorenjska (Upper Carniola), then turns to the Primorska region and the Karst, eastwards to Notranjska and comes to the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana, and then ends in Dolenjska (Lower Carniola) and Bela Krajina.



Figure 1: Slovene Literary Trail. Source: photo by Jasna Potočnik Topler

The road distance between more than one hundred authorial destinations makes more than 700 hundred kilometres. Every region in Slovenia has its popular literary places, and the most famous in Slovenia are probably literary places connected to Slovenia's greatest poets and writers, among them France Prešeren in Vrba (Carniola), Ivan Cankar in Vrhnika, Primož Trubar in Velike Lašče, Fran Levstik

(Litija, Čatež) etc. The trail tells the story about Slovenia through literature and thus represents Slovenian literary heritage. The Slovenian Writers Trail has become an integral part of Slovenian tourism products, and it also has the potential to become an important factor in Slovenian cultural tourism (Potočnik Topler, 2016). In this chapter the focus is on the Slovene region of Koroška, where tourism is underdeveloped for several reasons (lack of infrastructure, lack of stakeholders' cooperation, etc.), but literary tourism based on the literary heritage by Lovro Kuhar - known by his nom de plume Prežihov Voranc - is a tourism project worth developing further. The writer's ethnographic memorial museum, called The Prežihov Voranc Cottage ("Prežihova bajta" in Slovenian), located in the writer's birthplace Preški Vrh near Ravne na Koroškem, has been operating and accepting visitors since 1979. The museum is a monument to farmhouse architecture, a characteristic home of a small-scale farmer from Carinthia (called "bajtler" in the Carinthian dialect) at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries, especially known for having an open-hearth kitchen (Potočnik Topler, 2016). Today, the museum lets visitors pursue Prežih's (in the Slovene language "Prežihov" means Prežih's) literary works and tell stories of his life at a young age. Nearby the cottage stands a bronze statue of the writer overlooking the village of Kotlje, designed by the sculptor Stojan Batič (Figure 2). The question, however, is how to use the author and the novel(s) sensitively by the regional DMO to add the value of well-being to the tourism experience.



Figure 2: A bronze statue of Prežihov Voranc overlooking the village of Kotlje, designed by Stojan Batič. Source: photo by Jasna Potočnik Topler

3 The Concept of Well-Being in Literary Tourism

In 1948 Constitution of the World Health Organization, health is defined as "not the mere absence of diseases but a state of well-being" (WHO, 1948). Despite the fact that it was first mentioned soon after World War II, well-being is a concept that is challenging to define, but it is definitely what tourists seek (Pyke et al., 2016) and it has a significant role in disease prevention (Hartwell et al., 2012). In the literature, some inconsistency in terminology can be found, as well-being is sometimes used interchangeably with wellness, life satisfaction, quality of life, and even with health (Hanlon et al., 2013). Quality of life is not the same as well-being, but since quality of life represents the theoretical foundations of well-being (Pyke et al., 2016), Hagerty's (Hagerty et al., 2001) model of quality of life needs to be mentioned because it describes objective and subjective features of quality of life and mentions domains that are shared across cultures: emotional well-being, material well-being, relationships with family and friends, health and personal safety, work and productivity, and the feeling of being part of one's local community (Hagerty et al., 2001). Farkić and Taylor (2019) propose rethinking well-being through the concept of slow adventure, which enables deeper experiences by slowing down when it comes to journeys, preparing food, and trying new things. This concept is very close to literary tourism and to what Liang et al. (2020, 1) suggest in a recent publication, namely that "subjective well-being belongs to the category of 'quality of life' and has multiple philosophical foundations and theoretical sources including theories of hedonism, expectation, happiness and various itemised lists of emotions." McMahan and Estes (2011) argue that well-being has its roots in ancient Greece. It can be explained in two possible ways: eudemonic (arises when meaning and self-fulfilment in life are experienced) and hedonic (occurs when individuals are searching for pleasure and happiness) (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman et al., 2011). While Pyke et al. (2016) believe that cycling paths or walking trails are a eudemonic tourism product, and more in line with health than hedonic products, which include eating and drinking, this text argues that literary tourism offers both, experiences that enable eudemonic and hedonic well-being and that both types of experiences may affect individual's health positively. Benefits of well-being from a holiday experience provide many opportunities not only for tourists, but also for the visitor economy, and have the potential to be used as a marketing tool to attract tourists to a holiday destination (Pyke et al., 2016).

In connection to well-being, also studies on the so-called happiness factor (McCabe & Johnson, 2013) are on the rise; these argue that it is important for tourism products and services to provide experiences that can positively influence the quality of tourists' lives (Kruger et al, 2013).

Filep (2014, 266) defined tourist happiness "as a psychological state of fulfilment and well-being that is experienced in anticipatory, on site, and reflective travel phases". This is important because tourist happiness ultimately influences the promotion of tourist destinations (Filep, 2014).

When planning, creating, and developing literary walking tours, paths, and trails, it should be observed that a well-organised literary walking tour is educational, informative, interactive, unique and entertaining, sharing these attributes in just the right proportion for a specific individual or a group. The objective of literary walking tours is to contribute to participants' emotional and physical well-being. The recreational aspect of literary tours is in the walking, which can be adjusted to the participants' abilities, age, interests, etc. In Europe, many such tours exist. They are called heritage walking tours, wellness tours, and hiking tours, and offer walkers various programmes with the goal of achieving well-being. What is innovative and will be presented further on in this chapter, are travel writing walking tours that some DMOs in France and the UK try to introduce into the tourism offer. Some of them are designed based on the DRAMMA model (Newman et al., 2014), which includes six psychological needs: detachment, relaxation, autonomy, mastery, meaning, and affiliation. These psychological needs connect leisure to well-being and optimal functioning (Kujanpää et al., 2021).

4 The Prežihov Voranc Route

Since literary trails already exist in Slovenia and are mapped, the article addresses the research question of how the author Lovro "Prežihov Voranc" Kuhar (1893 -1950), whose legacy continues not only with his works, but also with several primary schools across Slovenia that carry the writer's name of the writer, in addition to Prežih's Memorial Room and the Prežihov Voranc Museum Cottage (Figure 3), etc., can attract domestic and foreign tourists to Slovenia as a destination, and especially to the destination of Koroška through the concept of well-being. Domestic tourists

are often attracted by the literary path of Lovro "Prežihov Voranc" Kuhar – called Vorančeva Pot in Slovenian.



Figure 3: A sign informing about the museum. Source: photo by Jasna Potočnik Topler

The path starts in the centre of Kotlje, continues to the natural spring called 'Rimski Vrelec' and Kotnik's house, further to nearby Pekel ("Hollow Hell" from the writer's short story *Teardrops*), onto the Kogel homestead and the Ivarčko Lake, the Šrotnek homestead, and then finishes at the Kotlje cemetery, where Prežihov Voranc is buried. The path offers beautiful sights of natural and cultural attractions (Figure 4), among which the Peca and the Uršlja Mountain, hayracks, churches and the architecture of Carinthian homesteads merit mention.



Figure 4: Walking trails from Prežihovina. Source: photo by Jasna Potočnik Topler

Lovro "Prežihov Voranc" Kuhar is a canonised Slovenian author, but the question of how to attract foreign tourists to get acquainted with his life and works remains a challenge. One of the possibilities for attracting foreign visitors and tourists is to find references to foreign lands and towns in his life and work, and, further on, to use these references as elements of storytelling. It is well known that when Prežihov Voranc was hiding from regimes because of his activist and political work, he was travelling across Europe, spending some time in Italy, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Norway, France, Russia, etc. These places he visited can, along with Prežih's writings, stories from his and contemporary times, and various travelogues, be used as references for attracting tourists, as one of the possible tools for attracting tourists and visitors is travel writing, which can be offered for reading, and engaging tourists in travel writings. Prežih's collection of short stories titled Solzice (Teardrops), along with his works Samorastniki (Self-Sown), Požganica, Jamnica, and Doberdob, which comprise a foundation for creating new stories, notes, and travelogues, can be utilised as tools for attracting wider audiences, not only visitors from Slovenia. A small museum (Figure 5) devoted to Prežih's life and work already exists, representing a typical farmer's cottage from the beginning of the 20th century, but the museum's management wants to upgrade it into a contemporary museum by involving visitors and using new technologies.



Figure 5: Prežihov Voranc Cottage. Source: photo by Jasna Potočnik Topler In the case of utilising Prežihov Voranc's literary heritage for the tourism purposes and branding of the Koroška Region, the municipality of Ravne na Koroškem, and the Mežica Valley, there are many possibilities of how to employ the author's personality and his texts. Tourists or visitors can try their own hand at describing the landscapes they see (before or after this activity they can read Prežih's descriptions). They can take the Prežih route and write down their own observations or perhaps even short literary texts, or just listen to stories narrated by a Tour Guide. Literary texts, indeed, have a significant role in attracting tourists to a certain destination and in keeping their attention, not only at the destination, but even before the actual visit, when tourists or visitors can prepare for a visit of Prežih's birth place by perusing archives and libraries (the Prežihov Voranc Memorial Room is in the main library in Ravne na Koroškem). Thus, literary trails and literary tours can provide opportunities for mental and physical activities, and, consequently, the overall satisfaction of visitors and tourists. The Literary Tourism experience can be adjusted for various segments of tourists, and the content of literary trails may be enriched in different directions to satisfy different interests of tourists (organising local dishes or must tastings, etc.). A model for successfully branding literary destinations is through travel writing courses, which should be included in higher education institutions' curricula for tourism studies in order to enhance writing skills as core tourism skills, enhance literacy, branding processes of products and destinations, and increase employability and overall satisfaction in the tourism sector.

5 Travel writing – A Ticket to Well-Being

One of the possible tools for attracting tourists and visitors is travel writing, which can be offered for reading, and engaging tourists in writing activities. Thompson (2011) argues that travel writing's reputation rose sharply in the second half of the 20th century, with a new generation of critically acclaimed authors and travel writers such as Paul Theroux, Bruce Chatwin, Ryszard Kapuscinski, and Robyn Davidson.

Mansfield (2019) elaborates on the subject in his paper on tourism management and place-branding, and states that where travel writing is developed initially tourists or locals are provided with literary texts that have discoverable places. These places can be museums, statues, trees, plants, lakes, rivers, churches, etc. The next step is the tourists' guided and self-directed movement to the places mentioned by some

author's novel. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, the definitions of place writing and travel writing are various and vague, but what is significant is that literature and text comprise an essential medium in many disciplines. Tuan (1991, 685) believes that this is due to "language's metaphorical power – the way individual words and, even more, sentences and larger units impart emotion and personality, and hence high visibility, to objects and places." The role that stories play should not be neglected and, according to Rose (2016), the potential of stories is in revealing the origins of thought and in their communicative power.

Prežih's collections of short stories *Solzice (Teardrops)* and *Samorastniki (Self-Sown)* and his novels *Jamnica*, as well as some of his other works, are ideal for place-branding in the Slovene region of Koroška, and especially in the Municipality of Ravne na Koroškem.

Here is a description of a summer's night from the novel *Jamnica* in the Slovene language that could be used as a pull factor to start exploring the village of Jamnica, which is the actual village of Kotlje:

Nad Jamnico se je že zganila topla, poletna noč. Temne sence so pokrile deželo na dolgo in široko, od ene gore na drugo in jo odele z globokim nočnim mirom. Jasno nebo, ki je na zahodu še zardevalo pod poljubčki umirajočih daljnih sončnih žarkov, je bilo naenkrat posuto z zvezdami, tako živimi in gorečimi, kakor da bi z neba gledalo milijon radovednih oči. Kakor daleč je segalo oko, je ležala sama temna širjava, ki so jo stražile še temnejše podobe strahotnih gora. Tudi sape so počivale in glasovi, ki so tu in tam vstajali, so bili čisti in jasni. To je bila prava koroška noč ... (Jamnica 37-38).

An attempt to translate the excerpt would go something like this:

A warm, summer's night had already set over Jamnica. Dark shadows covered the land long and wide, from one mountain to another, and covered it with deep nocturnal peace. The clear sky in the west, still glowing beneath the kisses of the dying distant rays of the sun, was suddenly sprinkled with stars, both alive and burning, as if a million curious eyes were looking from the sky. As far as the eye could reach, the dark endless plain lay, guarded by even darker images of the dreaded mountains. Even the breaths were resting and the voices rising here and there were clean and clear. It was a true Carinthian night ... (Jamnica 37-38).

The excerpt undoubtedly fits into literary tourism and place writing, along with the linguistic characteristics of a place. Thus, the concepts of literary tourism, place writing and travel writing are not only about the features of a landscape, but also about the people, their customs, languages and dialects.

Also *Teardrops*, as probably Prežih's most popular and most widely known text, has the potential and a strong communicative role in the branding of Koroška. This is an excerpt, describing a part of the farm that Prežih's family cultivated as tenants:

Trava v Peklu sicer ni bila kdo ve kako bohotna, bila pa je menda posebno sočna, ker jo je živina v tej globači le prerada mulila. Jaz sem se tega kraja bal, odkar sem se začel zavedati svojega bitja. Tega je bilo predvsem krivo njegovo ime. O peklu sem čul govoriti starše, ki so me učili prvih krščanskih resnic, o peklu sem slišal pripovedovati v cerkvi, ko sem začel hoditi tja in se držal matere za janko. V sa slika pravega pekla v moji mladostni domišljiji je odlično ustrezala našemu domačemu Peklu, manjkal je samo večni ogenj na njegovem dnu. Mislil pa sem si, da je naša globača vsaj kako preddverje pravega pekla, v katerega vodijo tajna vrata bodisi na dnu skrivnostne globače bodisi skozi žrelo gozdnate stene. V selej sem se z grozo v srcu približeval temu kraju in urno bežal stran, kakor hitro sem mogel. (Solzice, 11-12)

Translation:

Although there wasn't much grass in Hell, it seemed to be particularly succulent, because the livestock in this hollow loved to mulch it. I had been afraid of this place for as long as I could remember. Most of all, its name was to blame for that. I heard my parents, who taught me the first Christian truths, talking about hell, and I heard about hell in church when I started going there, holding onto my mother's skirt. In my youthful imagination, all the picture of real hell was a perfect match for our home hell, only the eternal fire at its bottom was missing. I thought, however, that our hollow was at least the foyer to the real hell, into which a secret door leads, either at the bottom of a mysterious hollow or through the maw of a wooded wall. I always approached this place with horror in my heart, running away as quickly as I could.

According to Mansfield (2017, 2), "researchers do believe there is a causal link between travel writing, both in the form of travel articles from the media as well as travel literature from iconic travel writers, and the behaviour of tourists; this behaviour may be to encourage them to make destination choices or as visitors at the destination to make decisions on what to see and do in the city space." Also language-placement of readers – visitors and tourists – is essential (Mansfield 2015, 208) because it carries a lot of information about the landscape, its people and heritage. Thus, the usage of dialects or slang may be significant. By employing the DRAMMA model (Newman et al., 2014), and the psychological needs of detachment, relaxation, autonomy, mastery, meaning and affiliation, literary walking tours can be further developed for various segments of tourists.

6 Conclusion

A well-organised literary walking tour is educational, informative, interactive, unique and entertaining, sharing these attributes in just the right proportion for a specific individual or a group to foster well-being by employing the DRAMMA model. The objective of literary walking tours is to contribute to participants' emotional and physical well-being. The recreational aspect of literary tours is in the walking, which can be adjusted to the participants' abilities, age, interests, etc. In the case of utilising the literary heritage of Prežihov Voranc for tourism purposes and branding Ravne na Koroškem, the Mežica Valley, and the whole region of Koroška, there are many possibilities for employing the authors' personality and his texts. The existing route, which is also a part of the Slovene Writers' Trail, is a good foundation. Tourists or visitors can try themselves in describing the landscape they see (before or after this activity they can read Prežih's descriptions). They can climb the nearest hills and the Uršlja Mountain, take the Prežih route, and write down their own observations, perhaps even short literary texts, or just listen to stories narrated by a tour guide. Tours may be structured (with a detailed plan) or semi-structured (ideas offered to tourists). Literary texts, indeed, have a significant role in attracting tourists to a certain destination and in keeping their attention, not only at the destination, but even before the actual visit, when tourists or visitors can prepare for a visit to Prežih's birth place by exploring archives and libraries (the Prežihov Voranc Memorial Room is in the main library in Ravne na Koroškem). Walking tours are a great way to connect literature, architecture, and culture in general into a recipe for an active and healthy life. To successfully achieve this, it is crucial to educate and empower experts at destinations to work together. This could be done through formal education on the one hand and through project activities in local communities on the other. For designing new sustainable tourism products, such as literary walking tours, it is essential that experts from all involved fields work together with locals.

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