

# Archaeological Tourism Products: Towards a Concept Definition

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Archaeological site managers generally recognize the economic benefits of archaeological tourism, but many sites still have many unexploited development opportunities. The importance of connecting different providers of products and services is still too often overlooked. Despite several publications dealing with different aspects of archaeological tourism, we found that the definition of one main concept is still missing: the definition of 'archaeological tourism product.' The paper is aimed at establishing and explaining this very concept, by providing its definition and categorizing it into different types and components. We moreover point out principles to be considered in its development and problems related to the loss of authenticity which frequently emerge in its commercialization. Ultimately, our aim is to highlight the importance of developing integral archaeological tourism products that meet the needs and wants of tourists and at the same time ensure preservation and sustainable management of archaeological heritage.

*Keywords:* archaeological tourism product, archaeological tourism, archaeological park, archaeological route, sustainable development



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## Introduction

Archaeological tourism, or archaeotourism as it is also called, is a growing branch of cultural tourism which also helps to increase public awareness of archaeological heritage as well as its preservation (Egri, 2021, p. 93). From a historical perspective, archaeological tourism has a very long tradition. Early forms of archaeological tourism, or journeys aimed at visiting the vestiges of the past, can be traced back to antiquity, with a master example in the figure of Pausanias and his *Description of Greece* (2nd century AD). Similarly, the Grand Tour (mostly between the 17th and early 19th century) can also be seen as an early form of

archaeological tourism (Melotti, 2007; Díaz-Andreu, 2020).

In more recent years, archaeological tourism developed as a specific discipline, with a rich theoretical background (e.g. Melotti, 2011; Mihelić, 2011; Comer & Willems, 2019; Timothy & Tahan, 2020) and with its own fairs. The Mediterranean Exchange of Archaeological Tourism fair in Paestum has been organized yearly since 1998 with the participation and exchange of experiences among countries reaching beyond the Mediterranean area and the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> Since 2015,

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<sup>1</sup> [www.borsaturismoarcheologico.it/en/partner/](http://www.borsaturismoarcheologico.it/en/partner/)

another similar event, tourismA, has taken place every year in Florence.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of the coronavirus epidemic, as even more people began to retreat from the urban environment and into nature, where a large part of archaeological sites are located, we can assume that their potentials have increased even more. This is also related to the fact that several cultural heritage institutions, such as museums, architectural complexes, etc., which represent the main attractions for culturally interested visitors, were at least partially closed to the public (Geser, 2021, p. 6), while several archaeological sites (which are mostly open-air) were not subjected to restrictions. Although the managers of archaeological sites recognize the advantages of archaeological tourism, most of the sites still have considerable untapped potential, especially in terms of connecting different providers of services necessary for a successful touristic approach. This problem was tackled by the ArcheoDanube project (Archaeological Park in urban areas as a tool for Local Sustainable Development), in the frame of which we performed the research presented in this paper. The project was co-funded by the European Union (ERDF, IPA, ENI) in the frame of the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme and was joined by 15 partners<sup>3</sup> from 11 different countries (Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia). One of the main objectives of the project was the development of archaeological tourism in the Danube macro-region by improving the management of archaeological heritage with spe-

cial emphasis on archaeological parks (Anranter et al., 2021; Drda-Kühn, 2021; Zanier & Ratej, 2021; 2022a; 2022b; Zanier et al., 2022; Egri, 2021, 2022; Danube Transnational Programme, 2022).

Despite several valuable studies and publications dealing with different aspects of archaeological tourism, we found that a definition of the main concept is still missing: the definition of 'archaeological tourism product.' In fact, in the literature this concept has not even been extensively presented or thoroughly analysed, although the term is frequently used. In this paper,<sup>4</sup> we therefore propose our own definition of archaeological tourism products, that we developed proceeding from already existing definitions of cultural tourism products and considering a wide range of case study examples, i.e. established archaeological attractions sold to tourists from all over Europe and beyond. We also substantiate why we believe that archaeological tourism products need to be considered as a specific concept, separated from cultural tourism products. We then define different types of archaeological tourism products and identify, as well as explain, their possible components. In the last part, we present different steps for developing archaeological tourism products and point out problems related to the loss of authenticity which frequently emerges in their commercialization.

### Methodological Premise

Our aim is to propose a concept definition of archaeological tourism products and their systematization in different types and components, which does not yet exist in the literature. We started our research by reviewing the definition of (cultural) tourism products. Since the definition of archaeological tourism products had to be newly established, we implemented a comparative analysis of case studies. Firstly, we analysed the 10 pilot archaeological sites included in the ArcheoDanube project (Zanier & Ratej, 2021, pp. 131–

<sup>2</sup> [www.tourisma.it/home-2/](http://www.tourisma.it/home-2/)

<sup>3</sup> These are: City Municipality Ptuj; Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia; First Hungarian Responsible Innovation Association; West-Pannon Regional and Economic Development Public Nonprofit Ltd; Romanian Academy Cluj branch, Institute of Archaeology and History of Art; The National Museum of Unification Alba Iulia; City of Vodnjan – Dignano; Association of Culture & Work; Bulgarian Association for Transfer of Technology and Innovation; Regional Development Agency of the Pilsen Region; Sustainability; Museum of Srem; Municipality of Centar Sarajevo; City Hall of Chisinau Municipality; Rousse Regional Museum of History.

<sup>4</sup> We attempted a first definition of 'archaeological tourism product' in a short publication about archaeological tourism (Egri, 2022, pp. 33–41) and we would take here the opportunity to improve the definition itself and to better explain and deepen the concept as well as related topics.

152).<sup>5</sup> Since these archaeological sites are still developing their tourism potential and can still hardly be recognized as tourism products, we widened our research to nine already established archaeological tourism attractions of the same Danube macro-region (Zanier & Ratej, 2021, pp. 33–52).<sup>6</sup> Both these steps were performed through survey research, collecting the data in the form of a questionnaire with the help of all ArcheoDanube project partners. In addition, we collected data about numerous case study examples from all over Europe, 17 of which were selected as good practices (Anranter et al., 2021).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, five

archaeological attractions were selected as examples of integral archaeological tourism products: these are Salzwelten in Austria, Brijuni in Croatia, the Archäopark Vogelherd in Germany, the archaeological park of Herculaneum in Italy, and Hadrian's Wall Country in the United Kingdom (Egri, 2021, pp. 64–75).

For the purpose of this paper, other case study examples were analysed in order to cover the full spectrum of integral archaeological tourism products. These are essentially the Selinunte Archaeological Park and the archaeological site of Rome in Italy, the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route, archaeological tours all over the world of the Archaeological Institute of America, DigVentures archaeological excavation camps, the Archaeological Festival in Biskupin in Poland, as well as the Castle Park Archaeological District and Moccasin Bend National Archaeological District in the United States.

The comparative analysis performed on the above-mentioned case study examples converged into the definition and systematization of archaeological tourism products, which we present in this paper. Due to the extensiveness of the research, we refer to the above-quoted studies for details on the single case study examples and their analysis.

### Definitions of (Cultural) Tourism Products

Archaeological tourism, which attracts tourists primarily with the aim of acquiring new knowledge about past human activity, is, of course, part of the broader term 'cultural tourism.' As a result, when developing

<sup>5</sup> The sites are (listed in countries' alphabetical order): the prehistoric archaeological site Vranjače and the Harem of Kalin Hadži Alija's mosque (built in 1535 and demolished in 1947) in Sarajevo for Bosnia and Herzegovina; the late antique and medieval fortress in the 'Horizon' residential area at Balchik in Bulgaria; the medieval town of Cherven and the rock-hewn churches of Ivanovo not far from the city of Rousse, also in Bulgaria; the open air museum 'Park kažuna' in Vodnjan – Dignano for Croatia, displaying typical vernacular architecture of the Istrian (and also broader Adriatic) area; the medieval castle 'Old Pilsen' on the Hillfort Hůrka in Starý Plzenec for the Czech Republic; the Iseum or temple of Isis and the Romkert or 'Ruin garden' (with remains of the 'Amber Road,' governor's palace, public baths, Mercury sanctuary and other buildings) in Szombathely, i.e. the Roman town of Savaria in Hungary; the 'Visterniceni archaeological area' with a bastion fortress built in the 1770s in the city of Chisinau in Moldova; the Alba Iulia fortress in the homonymous city in Romania, which includes fortifications from different eras (a Roman camp, a medieval fortress and the Austrian bastion fortification built in the 18th century); the archaeological areas of the Roman town of Sirmium in Sremska Mitrovica in Serbia; the 'Archaeological Park Panorama' (in development?) with underlying remains of the Roman town of Poetovio in Ptuj for Slovenia.

<sup>6</sup> We considered Carnuntum in Austria, the Radnevo archaeological park in Bulgaria, the site of Pohansko and the Archaeoskanzen Trocnov in the Czech Republic, the Archäopark Vogelherd and the ArchaeoCentrum Bayern-Böhmen/Čechy-Bavorsko in Germany, the Iseum in Szombathely in Hungary and the archaeological parks of Emona/Ljubljana and Simonov zaliv in Slovenia.

<sup>7</sup> The following good practices were identified: the archaeological parks of Aguntum and Carnuntum as well as the MA-MUZ museum in Austria, the Neolithic settlement in Tuzla

in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the medieval town of Cherven in Bulgaria, the Pavlov ArcheoPark in the Czech Republic, the Fortress of Culture in Šibenik in Croatia, the archaeological park of Bibracte in France, Xanten Archaeological Park in Germany, the Gorsium-Herculia Archaeological Park in Hungary, the archaeological park of Pompeii in Italy, the Alba Carolina Fortress and the Museikon museum in Alba Iulia in Romania, the Viminacium Archeological Park in Serbia, the Pavilion for the presentation of archaeological remains in Celje in Slovenia, as well as the London Mithraeum and the archaeological park of Vindolanda in the United Kingdom. The aforementioned sites were also used to define specific success factors and a development strategy for archaeological tourism (Drda-Kühn, 2021).

the new definition for archaeological tourism products, we can refer to already existing definitions of cultural tourism products, and also of tourism products in general.

According to Medlik and Middleton (1973, p. 138), a tourism product can be described as a group of activities, services, and benefits combined from components such as attractions, facilities and accessibility that complete the entire tourism experience.

Copley and Robson (1996) define cultural tourism products as anything that is offered to tourists at the destination that can satisfy their needs.

Another definition, from Richards and Munsters (2010, pp. 52–53), describes a cultural tourism product offered by historic cities as a combination of:

1. the core product, being the cultural tourism supply (monuments, street patterns, museums, art galleries, theatres, cinemas, routes, local culture, cultural events) and the related specific cultural tourist services, such as information and education; and
2. the additional product, being the general tourism product elements and the related tourist services consisting of:
  - general tourist facilities and services:
    - tourist organizations and travel intermediaries: tourist information offices, tourist associations, travel agencies, tour operators;
    - accommodation suppliers: hotels, holiday parks, camping sites;
    - catering industry: restaurants, cafés, and pubs;
    - retail business: (souvenir) shops, outdoor markets, banks;
  - transportation infrastructure:
    - accessibility, signposting, parking facilities;
    - private and public inner-city transporters: taxi companies, city bus service, underground.

Mckercher and Du Cros (2015, pp. 154–155) also divided the concept of cultural tourism product into the

*core product* (the main attraction), the *tangible product* (that converts benefits into something consumable for tourists), and the *augmented product* (additional value of the product for tourists).

Cultural tourism products can also be defined as a packed-up presentation of cultural heritage that meets all of the requirements of tourist demand in the destination while also providing high-quality support services to ensure a positive overall experience (Mihelić, 2019, p. 80).

According to the World Tourism Organization (2019, p. 18), ‘a tourism product is a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural, and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services, and activities around a specific center of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels and it has a life-cycle.’

#### **Our Definition of Archaeological Tourism Product**

From the review of various definitions of (cultural) tourism products, especially on the basis of Richards and Munsters (2010, pp. 52–53) and the World Tourism Organization (2019, p. 18), and considering the comparative assessment of all the above-mentioned case study examples, we suggest defining an archaeological tourism product as follows:

An archaeological tourism product is composed of the main archaeological attraction or a group of such attractions, which represents the core of the destination, as well as of assets and services such as information, interpretation, and education, accessibility to the destination, accommodation facilities, and other services that satisfy the needs of tourists at the destination and create an overall visitor experience in accordance with the principles of authenticity and sustainability.

In other words, an archaeological tourism product is composed of:

- the *archaeological core product*, being the archae-

ological tourism supply to be used in a sustainable way (archaeological parks, sites, or monuments as well as archaeological theme parks; archaeological trails and routes; archaeological museums and archaeological open-air museums; living history and experimental archaeology events; archaeological excavations and other archaeological research activities open for the public; specific cultural tourism services such as information, interpretation, and education); and

- the *additional touristic product*, being the general tourist facilities and services (food and beverage; accommodation; transportation; shopping; recreation, sport, wellness and entertainment; tourist organizations and travel intermediaries).

### Archaeological Tourism Products vs Cultural Tourism Products

Most definitions emphasize information and education as an essential part of the cultural tourism product (e.g. Chiriko, 2020, p. 4). This is also especially important for archaeological tourism products, but here the field of interpretation has to be emphasized even more. In order to be comprehensible to the average visitor, archaeological attractions need a more extensive and high-quality interpretation than other cultural destinations.

External factors such as politics, the economy, as well as social and cultural aspects have an impact on the development of cultural tourism products and the same is also valid for archaeological tourism products, as they are based on long-term management of archaeological attractions.<sup>8</sup> Preservation and conservation of archaeological heritage is particularly demanding. Archaeological remains are injured and fragile relics, with special needs in relation to conservation and protection procedures, if we would like to display them. They are not usable as they are, unlike other types of cultural heritage (e.g. a castle that can be renovated and used in a similar way as it was designed for); a new usage concept has to be designed (Zanier, 2016, p.

79; 2017, p. 29). It is also important to consider that an increased number of visitors can seriously threaten the preservation of archaeological remains; on the other hand, any restriction of visits can lead to negative reactions from visitors. Archaeological sites are also threatened by looting and vandalism, so security systems are essential in the frame of archaeological tourism products.

The principle of authenticity also has to be especially stressed in relation to archaeological tourism products. Archaeological sites adhere to the concept of 'ruins,' and any reconstruction can be misleading, i.e. lead to confusion for the uninformed visitor. The balance between authenticity, interpretational supplements, and conservation/protection measures is very difficult to achieve in archaeological sites.

Because of all the above-mentioned peculiarities, research, staff training, and specialization seem to be even more important within archaeological tourism products. The same is valid for cooperation and exchange with all stakeholders involved in developing the product.

We constantly come across examples of cultural heritage managers focusing on tangible assets rather than understanding how to provide quality tourism experiences. It is crucial that archaeological heritage managers also understand the needs and desires of tourists, so that their archaeological tourism products can be shaped to meet those needs and desires while also meeting management goals, such as heritage protection and conservation (Comer & Willems, 2019; Mckercher & Du Cros, 2015).

### Types of Archaeological Tourism Products

As mentioned above, archaeological tourism is part of cultural tourism, which is classified under *special interest tourism*. Cultural tourists, among whom we also include those who seek archaeological attractions, are not attracted by heritage in general, they are searching for travel experiences that will help them understand other cultures, and therefore they are seeking the informational and educational element of the tourism product, which is one of the main motives for their tourism consumption. Although cultural tourists want to have a sense of independence when travelling, they

<sup>8</sup> On the special needs of archaeological heritage management cf. e.g. Breznik (2014a, 2014b), Pirkovič (2018; 2022), Egloff (2019), and Zanier and Ratej (2022a; 2022b).

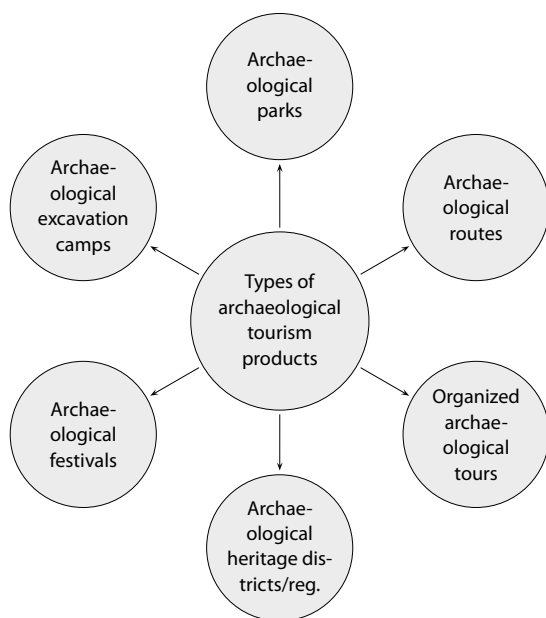


Figure 1 Types of Archaeological Tourism Products

tend to demand tourism products or services that offer compelling high-quality experiences, and which are integrated into a comprehensive service. Such travel arrangements consist of a set of partial tourist services (that include accommodation and transportation facilities) which are further subdivided into individual services (Brezovec & Nemeč Rudež, 2009, p. 133). By understanding why tourists visit archaeological destinations, providers of archaeological tourism products and services can shape the whole experience in such a way as to better satisfy the needs and desires of tourists and thus meet the market demand.

Archaeological tourism products are also very much dependent on the specific conformation of the archaeological tourism supply itself. As a result, we propose to classify integral archaeological tourism products into several different types, as listed in Figure 1.

The first type of archaeological tourism product are *archaeological parks*, which can be considered integral tourism products if, in addition to their main archaeological attraction, they also offer additional services and products to better satisfy the needs and wants of their visitors. A good example of such archaeological park being an integral archaeological tourism prod-

uct is Selinunte in Sicily, which is considered one of the largest archaeological parks in Europe, where visitors can choose from a variety of products and services such as different kinds of tours and excursions that also take into account other attractions in the area. A variety of information about the transportation and accommodation facilities, events, sports, nightlife, nearby beaches, and culinary services is provided on site, and comprehensive information about other local providers is also given.<sup>9</sup>

An *archaeological route* can also be a type of archaeological tourism product that connects different sites and tourism and other service providers that can be promoted under a common brand which helps with product visibility and its competitive advantage. This type of integration can also contribute to the better economic development of the wider region. Most tourists go on such trips individually, therefore it is even more important to provide them with all necessary information (besides information about archaeological attractions and sites, they may also need other basic information about nearby markets, restaurants, accommodation facilities, public transportation services, information centres, petrol stations, and emergency and healthcare facilities). The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route, which connects multiple providers, archaeological sites, and vineyards from 10 European countries, is a good example of such an archaeological tourism product. It includes various archaeological sites, attractions, buildings, and locations associated with the Roman period.<sup>10</sup>

*Guided archaeological tours* are another type of archaeological tourism product that integrate additional products and services and are adapted for different target groups. Usually, they include transportation, accommodation, escort and local guides, entrance fees for museums or parks, meals, tourist taxes, and travel insurance packages. The Archaeological Institute of America, for example, offers a diverse range of organized archaeological tours to archaeological destinations around the world.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <https://en.visitselinunte.com/archaeological-park/>

<sup>10</sup> [www.romanemperorsroute.org/](http://www.romanemperorsroute.org/)

<sup>11</sup> [www.archaeological.org/programs/public/tours/](http://www.archaeological.org/programs/public/tours/)

Public *archaeological excavation camps* can also represent integral tourism products, if they offer additional services such as transportation and accommodation services. These types of archaeological products are more common in developing countries, particularly in the field of volunteer tourism, which is usually a less profitable form of tourism for the destination. In general, volunteer tourists are also known for spending significantly less than ordinary cultural tourists. The motives of tourists who take part in volunteer work at archaeological sites can, in addition to having a unique experience or understanding more about other cultures and the human past, be their devotion to helping other communities or deepening their knowledge of foreign languages (Timothy & Tahan, 2020, p. 10). There are examples where, in exchange for volunteer work on their archaeological sites, managers offer paid accommodation to their volunteers, and sometimes they also have meals included. The DigVentures platform from the United Kingdom has a list of different archaeological sites from which tourists can choose and apply for their volunteer work. They also organize other courses in relation to archaeology and provide other general information that tourists may need or desire in the consumption process.<sup>12</sup> Vindolanda in the United Kingdom is also a very well-known example in this regard, where the focus is on the volunteer excavation programme. The site is managed and owned by the Vindolanda Trust which is an independent charity that raises its income from contributions and donations of the general public and its visitors (Birley, 2018). Archaeological excavation camps in Vindolanda are organized every year and attract many volunteer tourists from all around the world. Volunteer positions for camps are filled months in advance and so far, with their help, archaeologists have already uncovered 24% of their archaeological site, so they predict that they have another 150 years of excavations left. This kind of archaeological excavation camp is a good example of interactive involvement of tourists, which raises awareness and educates them about the historical significance and vulnerability of the site (Anranter et al., 2021).

<sup>12</sup> [www.digventures.com/projects/](http://www.digventures.com/projects/)

Another type of integral archaeological tourism products are *archaeological festivals* that connect many different providers and include additional services and products. The target groups of these kinds of staged festivals are mostly families with children and individuals. They can include animation, various workshops both for children and adults, theatrical and musical performances, information points, playground areas, food and beverage areas, toilet facilities, souvenir stalls with products from local vendors, and much more. Two good examples are a year-long festival called the 1900 Festival in the United Kingdom that is organized along Hadrian's Wall.<sup>13</sup> Another one is the Archaeological Festival in Biskupin in Poland, which has been organized since 1995 and whose archaeological reserve is also one of the largest in Europe. Within these festivals, many different kinds of activities are organized, which attract thousands of visitors.<sup>14</sup>

We add to this overview an, in the archaeological field, somehow unusual definition: the *archaeological heritage district or region*,<sup>15</sup> which can be described as an extensive area that exhibits a degree of cultural homogeneity in a particular period (Darvill, 2009). Products consisting of archaeological districts or regions containing several archaeological attractions (archaeological sites, archaeological museums, archaeological events, etc.) normally also include other services, such as overall travel organization (travel packages offered by travel agencies), travel services (transport, guidance, and supply), and other services within the archaeological district or region (accommodation, restaurants and bars, animation, shops, etc.). A good example of an archaeological heritage region is Hadrian's Wall Country in the United Kingdom, which shows how different service and product providers can connect and promote each other at the

<sup>13</sup> <https://1900.hadrianswallcountry.co.uk/events/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.biskupin.pl/zwiedzanie/#kalendarium>

<sup>15</sup> The definition of 'archaeological district' in particular is not very common and relates to the more usual definitions of 'cultural district' (cf. e.g. Wynne, 1992; Brooks & Kushner, 2001; Santagata, 2002; Nuccio & Ponzini, 2016) and 'historic or heritage district' (cf. Ginting & Vinky Rahman, 2016; Saleh El-Basha, 2021), both used especially in urban studies.

same time.<sup>16</sup> This is one of the best examples from the marketing point of view, as it increases the visibility of the region as a whole. Archaeological districts include extensive areas with a cohesive group of sites. For example, Castle Park Archaeological District and Mocasín Bend National Archaeological District, which are both located in the United States of America, represent the history of human habitation through different periods (History Colorado, 2022; National Park Service, 2022).

These are, in our opinion, the main types of archaeological tourism products that can be offered to the public for consumption; every other combination of archaeological attraction with products and services, that satisfy the needs and wants of tourists, meeting the definition explained previously, can also be defined as an archaeological tourism product.

### How to Compose an Archaeological Tourism Product

When designing a cultural or archaeological tourism product, it is essential to be aware that cultural tourists consume these products because they want to fulfil an inner need. Archaeological tourism demand is akin to heritage tourism demand in general, since cultural tourists' motives for travelling also include curiosity to learn about other cultures and to meet their special interests, hence the educational component. On the one hand, cultural tourists want to have a sense of independence, but simultaneously they want their experience to be guided and at the same time authentic. This must be taken into account in the development of a cultural tourism product as well as when developing an archaeological tourism product. One of the most important aspects of a product is its consumption to satisfy the needs, wants, and desires of tourists, which helps the managers in achieving their long-term financial goals and other goals such as education, and cultural heritage conservation and protection for future generations. It is crucial that the target groups of the product are clearly identified and that the product is adapted to their needs (Timothy & Tahan, 2020).

The commodification or transformation of assets into archaeological tourism products is an important step in archaeological tourism that can be offered to tourists for sustainable tourism consumption. Because of its complexity, scale, location, and setting, each cultural heritage asset is unique; therefore, it is particularly important that the managers of the archaeological sites implement sustainable development and management and that they preserve the authenticity of the site. Otherwise, the consequences can be irreversible (Kotler & Turner, 1989, p. 435; Mckercher & Du Cros, 2015).

As already mentioned, archaeological tourism products are composed of different assets and services. Some are related to the *archaeological core product*, others to the *additional touristic product*. Archaeological tourism products are compound entities and only appropriate components can be composed into a sound ensemble. The thematic link should be respected in most components of the archaeological tourism product. But it can be also of advantage to seek new, unexpected, surprising combinations in order to awaken the attention and curiosity of the visitors as well as their emotions, such aspect being continuously more emphasized in recent tourism research (Buda et al., 2014; Scott et al., 2017; Mitas & Bastiaansen, 2018; Skavronskaya et al., 2019; Skavronskaya et al., 2021).

Multi-sensoriality is another important principle, which is highlighted in recent works on the tourism experience and tourism marketing (Isacsson et al., 2009; Agapito et al., 2013; Meacci & Liberatore, 2018; Gómez-Suárez & Yagüe, 2021) and we also recommend it for archaeological tourism products, where it seems even more important to bring to life the lost multi-sensorial reality of the past (Melatti, 2011, pp. 9–10).

As we have already stressed, interpretation is especially important in archaeological tourism products, and in this context, it is also important to take into account people with different disabilities. In the same way, they have to be considered in relation to all other facilities and services of the product.

We can certainly expect that archaeological tourism products will also increasingly evolve in the direction of digital technology, which is especially useful

<sup>16</sup> [www.hadrianswallcountry.co.uk/](http://www.hadrianswallcountry.co.uk/)



for the interpretation of archaeological attractions. For example, archaeological virtual tours of sites or museums have already been included by many destinations in their offer and help to enhance visitors' experiences. Particularly during the coronavirus epidemic, when travelling to other destinations was significantly more difficult due to strict regulations, the demand for such products and services increased.

The networking of different providers and the combination of different products and services into integral archaeological tourism products, which meet the demand of cultural tourists at the destination, can help with product differentiation and in increasing the competitiveness when marketing this type of products.

In the following paragraphs, we identify possible components of an archaeological tourism product as also illustrated in Figure 2. We firstly highlight assets of the archaeological core product and then its services. Lastly, we discuss assets and services of the additional touristic product.

#### Assets of the Archaeological Core Product

The basic component of an archaeological tourism product is a *place* of archaeological relevance (the archaeological destination) or a group or series of such places, connected by spatial, thematic, cultural or chronological relations, together composing a unitary itinerary or cultural district or region, telling us one story of our past. Such places can conform to different types of archaeological sites, archaeological monuments, archaeological trails (as well as routes), archaeological parks, archaeological theme parks, archaeological museums, archaeological open-air museums, or other museums with archaeological content. These places have to be publicly accessible and need to have at least minimal visitor infrastructure and equipment. To understand archaeological remains, despite their fragmentary nature, especially equipment for the clarification and illustration of their contents, original state and meaning, i.e. *non-personal interpretation, information, and education media*, seems to be essential for all mentioned types of assets.

Some of the above-mentioned assets need some explanation, as even at this level there is no universal



Figure 2 Components of an Archaeological Tourism Product

terminological consensus. One example is the already mentioned *archaeological parks*. They can represent integral archaeological tourism products in their own right, if they include a complete range of tourism services. Otherwise, they can represent one of the components of a bigger, composed product. But what specifically are archaeological parks? The term has various uses (Breznik, 2014b; Jurak, 2020). After reviewing various definitions in recent international doctrinal documents (ICOMOS, 2015, 2017), based on the definition in the Croatian legislation (Zakon o zaštiti i očuvanju kulturnih dobara, 2020, article 6), we propose to define 'archaeological park' as follows: 'An archaeological park is a researched, protected, and presented archaeological site or its part, that includes informative and didactic components of presentation and interpretation in order to raise awareness of the importance of archaeological heritage' (Zanier, Ratej, 2021, p. 154).

A term mistakenly frequently used as a synonym for archaeological park is *archaeological open-air museum*. This category is defined by the charter of the International Association of Archaeological Open-Air Museums:<sup>17</sup> ‘An archaeological open-air museum is a non-profit permanent institution with outdoor true-to-scale architectural reconstructions primarily based on archaeological sources. It holds collections of intangible heritage resources and provides an interpretation of how people lived and acted in the past; this is accomplished according to sound scientific methods for the purposes of education, study, and enjoyment of its visitors.’ Archaeological open-air museums therefore are not necessarily located on an archaeological site, but also at other places, and consist mostly of reconstructions.

Areas without archaeological remains that are open to the public and exhibit outdoor collections of buildings, true to scale architectural reconstructions, and artefacts, but intended for amusement and profit are *archaeological theme parks* (Paardekooper, 2015).

The term *archaeological trail* is normally used for physically existing paths crossing archaeological sites. *Archaeological routes* or itineraries connect different archaeologically interesting points (or poles of attraction), without presupposing the establishment of a new, dedicated path.<sup>18</sup> For their ability to connect various attractions and services, we have already mentioned routes between the possible types of archaeological tourism products, and frequently they perform in fact as such.

Specific definitions for *archaeological sites* and *archaeological monuments* depend on each country’s legislation. In Slovenia, an ‘archaeological site is the original place of deposition and discovery of archaeological remains.’ At the same time, ‘archaeological remains are all things, and any traces of human activity from previous periods on the surface, in the soil and water, the conservation and the study of which contribute to discovering the historical development of mankind and

its relation with the natural environment, for which the main source of information is archaeological research or discovery and for which it can be assumed that they were under ground or under water for at least 100 years and that they have characteristics of heritage. Archaeological remains are also things related to cemeteries, as defined under the regulations on war graves, and to war, together with the archaeological and natural context, which were under ground or under water for at least 50 years’ (Zakon o varstvu kulturne dediščine (ZVKD-1), 2008, article 3). Protection is established with different gradations: registered cultural heritage, monuments of local importance, and monuments of national importance (Zakon o varstvu kulturne dediščine (ZVKD-1), 2008, articles 3, 8, 11), so *archaeological monuments* (of local or national importance) represent the highlights of our archaeological heritage.

The definition of *archaeological museums* is similarly related to legal definitions concerned with the establishment of protection of movable archaeological finds, which are stored and presented to the public in such museums. In Slovenia, ‘archaeological finds are moveable archaeological remains, which have been under the ground or underwater for at least 100 years. Archaeological finds are also weapons, ammunition, and other military equipment, military vehicles, and vessels, or parts thereof, which were underground or underwater for at least 50 years’ (Zakon o varstvu kulturne dediščine (ZVKD-1), 2008, article 3). But in Slovenia, we do not have archaeological museums as such, as this function is covered by the regional museums as well as by the National Museum. In other countries, specialized museums for archaeology are very common. Independently from the designation of the institution, very successful synergies can be established within a composed archaeological tourism product by connecting archaeological sites and museums with archaeological content.

#### Services of the Archaeological Core Product

The archaeological core product is also composed of *activities and services* of archaeological and educational character. Typically, the above-mentioned places dispose of services offered by specialized staff,

<sup>17</sup> [www.exarc.net/about-us/charter](http://www.exarc.net/about-us/charter)

<sup>18</sup> For a review of different definitions of ‘cultural route,’ which we consequently apply to the concept of archaeological route, cf. Durusoy (2014, pp. 9–13).

related to the explanation of its archaeological contents. These are called *personal interpretation, information, and education media* and they comprise different kinds of guided tours, workshops, and lectures.

The archaeological core product can also be based on other activities of archaeological content, such as *public forms of archaeological excavations* and other organized forms of archaeological research activities with the participation of the lay audience. These activities allow visitors to participate *in medias res*, but imply, of course, extensive preparation on the part of the participants, as well as strict protocols and agreements.

Further, lively participation of visitors can be assured by *living history events* of archaeological character. These events seek to give observers and participants a sense of stepping back in time by using tools, activities, and costume in an interactive presentation of a specific archaeological culture or re-enactment of a specific event related to archaeological periods. A lot of experience has been accrued for this kind of events, especially for later historical periods; it is clear that in relation to archaeological periods the reconstruction of several aspects can be problematic, because of insufficient or fragmentary information. Intense preparation of the participants is therefore advised for these events and can be part of a comprehensive learning or research process.

Re-enactment can be also pushed to a very sensitive, experienced form, which is called *Live Action Role-Playing* or LARP, where the participants portray different and specific characters in accordance with an agreed scenario, which can again be related more generally to an archaeological culture or a specific event of relevance for an archaeological period.

Other activities and services related to the archaeological core product may include aspects of *experimental archaeology*, which often implies the creation of copies of structures and objects of a specific culture or period, based on archaeological evidence, using only appropriate technologies, tools and materials. Living history and experimental archaeology can, of course, be perfectly intertwined in order to recreate comprehensive and informative experiences of the past. Sometimes these fields are also connected to re-

search activities and help us to understand and reconstruct specific facets of the past. Here we can point out as an example experimental works on practical aspects of gladiatorial combat (Battaglia, 2002; Teyssier & Lopez, 2007), typically performed in the frame of popular living history events.

#### The Additional Touristic Product

As we are discussing archaeological tourism products here, the touristic aspect should not fall short, either. We must not forget that our visitors need some traditional touristic services. First of all, we have to reflect on transportation means leading to our archaeological destination or between a group of such destinations composing an itinerary or cultural district, or between our archaeological destinations and places where other touristic services can be reached. We should be able to offer our visitors different transport options, from standard to more sportive or thematic ones, and arrange facilities in accordance with them. Also in this aspect, the main message or story related to our archaeological tourism product can be reflected by using appropriate means of transportation (e.g. in use in the period represented by the archaeological destination).

*Food, beverage, and accommodation* are, of course, essential services for tourists and if we cannot provide them within our archaeological destination, we need to include suitable suggestions in our archaeological tourism product. Fruitful collaborations are possible with external providers and in this case a thematic relation to the archaeological destination can also be easily assured (e.g. with recipes and lodging inspired by the period or specific context illustrated by the specific archaeological destination). For example, near a site related to the Roman military, a camping site inspired by Roman military camps can be created, as was tentatively established within the Claustra+ project in Slovenia.<sup>19</sup> Win-win solutions, which are favourable for all partners involved, with mutual advertising and a strong comprehensive visitor programme, can be easily established.

<sup>19</sup> [www.claustra.org/project-claustra/](http://www.claustra.org/project-claustra/)

*Shopping* is another service that seems to be indispensable in such a frame and can also create an important link to local economic development and creative industries. In this case, too, it is not necessary to organize specific shops and products such as souvenirs or other local artefacts at the archaeological destination itself. However, the production and sale of such objects in affiliated or associated shops, where the link to the archaeological destination is still recognizable, should be encouraged.

An archaeological tourism product may also include other services related to *recreation, sport, wellness, and entertainment*. These activities can be perfectly in line with the topic of the archaeological destination, or they can represent a welcome diversion. Many of these activities can be easily combined with the visit of the archaeological destination (e.g. running or horse riding through extensive archaeological sites) and can represent an added value for many visitors who are not only interested in archaeology, but would also like to experience something else. For example, in Rome, Archeorunning was developed in 2016 and represents a successful, registered trademark offering running tours through the ancient remains and much more.<sup>20</sup> In several archaeological areas surrounding Rome, riding tours also are available.<sup>21</sup> Especially in this segment, it is possible to integrate different services in one, combining, for example, *sport, recreation, and transportation* in one activity. Some of these activities can match specific functions and aspects of the archaeological destination and can help to immerse the tourist in the experience, even if they are accomplishing these activities in another context (e.g. combining a visit to an ancient thermal area with a visit to a contemporary spa). Also, in this case, successful collaborations with external partners are possible and represent a way to anchor the archaeological destination into the local economy.

*Tourism organizations and travel intermediaries* have to be part of the product, promoting, boosting, and selling it to the public. The best product cannot reach the buyer without a professional seller.

<sup>20</sup> [www.archeorunning.com/en/](http://www.archeorunning.com/en/)

<sup>21</sup> [www.freedome.it/passeggiate-cavallo/roma/](http://www.freedome.it/passeggiate-cavallo/roma/)



Figure 3 Steps for Developing an Archaeological Tourism Product

### Steps for Developing an Archaeological Tourism Product

Hence, integral archaeological tourism products are composed of an archaeological core product and an additional touristic product, each having different components which can be combined into a sound, multi-sensorial ensemble representing for the tourist a unique, comprehensive experience. All components do not need to be covered by one entity; networking with appropriate local partners which can benefit in the same way from the archaeological tourism product should be encouraged. The chosen components of the product should be in line with its target groups and offer them different options, also ensuring easy adaptation and frequent updates. In all chosen components, principles of sustainability and inclusion have to be respected, otherwise the archaeological tourism product will soon be burnt out.

For the development of an archaeological tourism product we propose to follow a simple approach (Figure 3), derived from several models for cultural tourism product development.

The first step includes the analysis and evaluation of the current situation concerning the archaeological heritage and the present tourism flows, their

composition, and present satisfaction grade. A *report* about these aspects with solid numeric data and clear overviews represents a necessary requirement.

On the basis of this analysis the needs and the opportunities, both in relation to the specific local economic and archaeological situation, should be identified. In accordance therewith, specific goals related to the archaeological tourism product should be formulated, while simultaneously also recognizing stakeholders. All these data should be systemized in a concise *strategy*.

Together with the stakeholders, the planning process of the archaeological tourism product should then be started, in line with already identified needs, opportunities, and goals, as well as current and coveted target groups of the product. In this, synergies should also be recognized. Special attention must be paid to thematic soundness, multi-sensorial experiences, sustainability, and inclusion. All possible components of an archaeological tourism product should be considered. Solutions for all of the aforementioned aspects should be envisaged in order to plan a truly comprehensive product. All measures and ideas must be systemized and explained in a *management plan* related to the whole archaeological tourism product, not only to the archaeological destination. Within the management plan, a realistic time schedule for the implementation of the tourism product must be defined, as well as indicators that will allow the progress of the archaeological tourism product to be clearly tracked. Responsibilities, a clear management structure, and a decision-making process should also be defined. A *management agreement* should be defined and signed by all actively involved partners. Other stakeholders should testify their interest and support within *letters of intent*.

Then, the implementation of the plan should follow, making the archaeological tourism product come to life. Collaboration with partners and stakeholders should be kept at an optimal level, including through frequent meetings. In relation to the staff working with the product, ambitious professionals, kept up to date with training, are a must. *Periodical reporting*, especially in relation to the defined indicators, is necessary for progress monitoring.

As a very important step in this process, *promotion and marketing* of the archaeological tourism product should be highlighted in a special way (cf. Chiriko, 2020; Sedmak, 2017), even if these activities represent only one part of the implementation process of the archaeological tourism product.

Once the archaeological tourism product is implemented, visitors must be monitored, including quantitative and qualitative information. *Surveys* aimed at documenting more complex qualitative data and visitor satisfaction are very important, but they should be kept to a minimum, as they can bother visitors if they are too long. In response to the visitor feedback and new tourism trends, the archaeological tourism product should be regularly *updated* with new activities and elements. Every product has a life cycle and after the first boom, a period of stagnation and less interest is normal, and has to be overcome with improvements and novelties, the importance of which we have already highlighted above. At this point new needs, opportunities and goals have to be defined and the planning and implementation process can start once again.

### **Archaeological Tourism Products and the Trap of Consumerism**

After encouraging the development of integral archaeological tourism products, it is necessary to also draw attention to risks and problems. In our constantly changing, liquid post-modern society, archaeological heritage has also become a liquid concept, or in the words of Marxiano Melotti (2011, p. 2): 'Archaeological parks are gradually taking on the features of theme parks. Museums compete to draw in visitors by offering attractions which have little to do with traditional archaeology. These are, however, marginal signs and remain outside a far wider process. Such changes are, in fact, keeping pace with other far more crucial transformations. Archaeological tourism no longer necessarily implies contact with an archaeological object. It is possible to enjoy experiences of an archaeological kind in contexts totally devoid of archaeological monuments or archaeological finds.' In the same way, new forms of relative authenticity are also emerging heavily in archaeological tourism (cf. e.g. the recon-

struction of the Altamira cave, visited by hundreds of thousands of visitors), of course accompanied by a massive use of virtual reality. The very aim of archaeological tourism, to be a mechanism enabling the preservation, valorisation, and dissemination of archaeological heritage, is falling short in several examples, either because of the effects of mass tourism, consuming the fragile remains of the past, or by creating sensational archaeological experiences made only of reproductions, digital media, virtual reality, shopping, and edutainment. Hyper-tourism, consumerism, and relativization of authenticity risk distorting and consuming our archaeological destinations and we should not aim at that.

### Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to present a new concept within cultural tourism, i.e. the integral archaeological tourism product. To successfully meet the needs and wants of tourists that visit archaeological attractions it is essential that managers of archaeological attractions are aware of the importance of an integral approach when developing their archaeological tourism product, which is composed of the main archaeological attraction and a group of assets and services. The result of connecting different providers and services into an integral archaeological product improves the overall experience of tourists who will return home with a positive impression and will more likely revisit and recommend a destination to their friends and family. Although economic competitiveness is not so often discussed in the field of archaeological tourism, it is important, especially in terms of providing funds for maintenance and restoration of the archaeological heritage itself, which is best achieved by a self-funding approach through the thoughtful development of an integral, authentic, and sustainable archaeological tourism product.

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