

From Multiethnic Empire to Nation-State: Symbolic Development of Opatija/Abbazia as a Tourist Destination



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Opatija/Abbazia has a special place in the history of the development of Croatian tourism. It is considered to be the first tourist resort in Croatia, created around the half of the 19th century, when most of the territory of present-day Croatia was a part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Situated on the “Austrian Riviera”, a stretch of coast which included parts of present-day Italy, Slovenia and Croatia, Opatija/Abbazia quickly became the most prestigious tourist resort in the Empire, popular with the Austrian-Hungarian nobility and wealthy citizens from all over the Empire. Today, Opatija is one of the most prominent symbols of Croatian tourism, but it also symbolizes a cultural connection with the past, as an embodiment of the collective memory of the imperial era. This is most evident in the way contemporary tourism marketing practices make use of Austrian-Hungarian heritage to create a particular image of Opatija, and Croatia as a whole, as a unique tourist destination. Archives in Croatia hold various tourism-related materials from the period of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, making possible a diachronic analysis of the process of creating Opatija/Abbazia as a tourist destination from its very beginning.

This paper analyses visual and textual representations of Opatija/Abbazia in tourist promotional materials and other popular publications from the time of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, as well as contemporary tourist promotional materials, focusing on heritage and its role as a symbolic resource used in the process of identity building. A diachronic view of the process of “heritagization” will provide an insight into the discursive practices of heritage selection and cultural representation in two different time periods and two different political situations with a special focus on the representations of cultural and linguistic diversity. The analysis will be carried out using the methods of critical discourse analysis and multimodal analysis.